BUYER'S REMORSE? WHITE EDUCATORS' COGNITIVE DISSONANCE, RACIAL IDENTITIES, AND THE PROMISE OF MULTICULTURAL TEACHER EDUCATION

by

Heather E. Yuhaniak

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Abstract

Two gaps plague education in the U.S. One is the gap in achievement between students of color and their White peers, and the other is the racial gap between an ethnically diverse student body and an increasingly White teaching staff. Contributing to this gap are the racial identities and ideologies that White teachers employ to explain the persistent underachievement of students of color. Unfortunately, multicultural teacher education (MTE) often fails to help educators develop an understanding of how racism has been institutionalized into American education and how it continues to create and perpetuate inequities. MTE also often triggers cognitive dissonance in White participants, which may account for the fact that they are more likely than their peers of color to drop out of a graduate MTE certificate program designed for in-service educators. This study examines factors that impact White educators' participation in an MTE program as well as their development of non-racist identities and ideologies.

Keywords: cognitive dissonance, White racial identity, multicultural teacher education

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Executive Summary

The racial divide between U.S. students and their teachers is large and widening. Today's student body is more culturally and linguistically diverse than ever, while the teaching force remains primarily White (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Without study of Whiteness and its hegemonic and invisible nature, White educators reproduce curricula, pedagogy, and policy designed to benefit their racial group, not the increasingly diverse group of students they serve (Marx & Pennington, 2003; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). White educators enrolled in a graduate multicultural teacher education (MTE) program for in-service educators in the suburban mid-Atlantic Carver School District are no different.

White participants in this MTE program are also less likely to persist than their colleagues of color (50% of White educators in a recent cohort dropped out at some point during the five-course sequence). When surveyed about their attrition, some cited family, work, and other responsibilities that conflicted with their coursework. Others blamed the program itself and its focus on race. Though they did not use the terminology, both drop outs themselves and their peers who persisted in this MTE program noted a connection between participant *cognitive dissonance* and their decision to drop out. Festinger (1957, 1962) coined the term to explain the discomfort an individual experiences when struggling with two conflicting cognitions (attitude v. attitude, attitude v. behavior). For White educators who have been socialized into viewing their Whiteness as *normal*, learning about the contrasting lived experiences of their peers and students of color triggers dissonance, as does the program's focus on helping them to develop non-racist White Racial Identities ([WRI] Helms, 1990).

Though thin, the literature points to the importance of teaching students about cognitive dissonance and then providing explicit ways to help them work through it over the course of the semester. One study in particular (Scheid and Vasko, 2014) found that White students are particularly apt to distance themselves from disparate cognitions about racial inequity through silence, over-emphasis on the individual rather than institutional nature of racism, and failure to consider their own complicity in systems of racial injustice. The literature on the WRI of in-service educators is scant, as is the research base connecting WRI and cognitive dissonance. The literature on WRI and Helms' model itself does not detail the experience of cognitive dissonance that individuals in that later phases of WRI continue to face. This investigation explored this continued disequilibrium in order to explain the potential connection between sustained negotiation of dissonance about race and the development of a non-racist WRI.

Findings from this dissertation study suggest that race-related stress persists beyond the initial phases of WRI development. In order to create a transformative learning experience for White educators in MTE courses, designers should consider use of disorienting dilemmas that help participants call into question their previously-held beliefs about race and its impact on education. Course content should include study of the sociological aspects of Whiteness, including White dominance, as well as supportive psychological theory (WRI, dissonance) and process (interracial dialogue) that help White participants adopt new, more inclusive worldviews. Interracial dialogue can be carefully structured around agreements designed to promote a *Productive Zone of Dissonance (PZD* for White participants.

While the small sample size of this study limits the generalizability of conclusions, its findings may inform the future design of MTE courses and programs for

White educators. Though the study was conducted in a large suburban district, its results and the literature supporting them suggest that all White educators in the U.S. can benefit from a focus on the institutional and structural *systems* that reproduce racist outcomes for students of color.

Chapter 1: Whiteness: A National Epidemic

The myth of a post-racial America is quickly crumbling. Hastening its demise is an unrelenting yet unexamined normalization of Whiteness. It is Whiteness that drives the White police officer to shoot first and ask questions later when confronting a Black suspect. It is Whiteness that embraces a president elected to "make American great again," a subtle suggestion that a bye-gone era when marginalized groups had fewer civil liberties was somehow preferable (Ross, 2015). It is Whiteness that fuels the pipeline to prison in which students of color are pushed out of classrooms and schools and into the privatized prison industry for incarceration rather than education. It is Whiteness at work when the recently revised Advanced Placement U.S. History curriculum is attacked as *revisionist* for its inclusion of the perspectives of traditionally oppressed groups. Despite mounting evidence to the contrary, many White Americans refuse to acknowledge the role race plays in the lives of everyday Americans. They reject Du Bois' (1903) assertion that, in the United States, the great issue is the race issue. They claim not to *see* race, ignoring or debating its import and giving credence to what sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2010) calls *colorblind racism*. He argues that America has transitioned away from overt and explicit race-based discrimination and toward a false ideal: that because race should not matter, many adopt of the false pretense that it does not even in the face of everyday examples of how it does.

White educators are not immune to this new form of racism. Many have faced increased scrutiny, discipline, or loss of employment for their public commentary on publicized racial incidents in social media (Chan, 2016; Edwards, 2017; Klein, 2015; Shvedsky, 2016; Walker, 2016). As public servants, teachers serve an increasingly

diverse student body and the calls for accountability and the guarantee of educational equity have never been louder. This moral imperative to promote success for each student is hindered by the fact that the majority White teacher force is mismatched racially, ethnically, and culturally to students sitting in front of them (Sleeter, 2001; Swartz, 2003; Cochran-Smith, 2003). Approximately 82% of the nation's teachers are White, though White students represent only 50% of the national student population (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The racial mismatch between teachers and students is projected to endure; the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education found that in 2013, White graduates earned 82% of bachelor's degrees in education. A recent paper co-authored by the National Council on Teacher Quality and the Brookings Institution (Putman, Hansen, Walsh, & Quintero, 2016) detailed the chances of achieving what the authors call racial parity, or a racial demographic match between students and teachers. They found that since the student population diversifies faster than that of the teachers and no significant efforts have yet been made to close this hiring gap, it will actually stay the same (between percentages of Black teachers and Black students) and increase by four points (between percentage of Hispanic teachers and Hispanic students) between now and 2060. These statistics bely the fact that now, more than any time in U.S. history, students of color are being taught by those who are not of their racial or cultural background (Douglas, B., Lewis, Douglas, A., Scott, & Garrison-Wade, 2008).

Aside from this *demographic divide* (Gay & Howard, 2000; Hodgkinson, 2001, 2002), there is a sizable and persistent gap in the achievement of Black and Latino students when compared to that of their White and Asian peers (Little and Bartlett, 2010; Rothstein, 2004; Wagner, 2010). Multiple factors contribute to this gap including (a) housing policy that has created neighborhoods now more segregated than they were prior

to the Civil Rights era (Lichter, Parisi, & Taquino, 2015), (b) the restriction of access to rigorous curriculum for all student groups through academic tracking (Oakes, 2008), and (c) family socioeconomic status and background (Coleman, et al., 1966). Of those within control of the school, no contributing factor has been as studied and scrutinized as teacher quality. Economists Chetty, Friedman, and Rockoff (2011) conclude that replacing a teacher with low value added (VA- bottom 5%) would increase a student's lifetime income by $250,000 or more. The role of the teacher in maintaining or disrupting the achievement gap is worth consideration given the research on their lasting impact on students.

Statement of the Problem

Akiba, LeTendre, and Scribner (2007) describe the exigent "importance of quality public education as one of the few mechanisms available in the United States to counterbalance the transmission of social status and privilege. Access to high-quality teachers… [is] essential to mitigating long-term social inequality" (p. 370). Unfortunately, professional learning for educators cannot claim to ensure the quality of teachers it yields. In terms of preparing a mostly White teaching force to ensure the achievement of students who are racially and culturally different from them, many educators complete only a single multicultural teacher education (MTE) course, which is sometimes voluntary (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Little & Bartlett, 2010; Weisman & Garza, 2002). Weddington and Rhine (2006) assert that completion of a lone MTE course has proven inadequate in terms of preparing educators to address issues of privilege and racism, which often remain invisible to those who have benefited from them. Many MTE courses fail to transcend a "heroes and holidays" approach to multiculturalism (Zeichner,

et al., 1998) or to interrogate educator racial ideologies, which serve as powerful filters through which people view their own and others' attributes and actions.

MTE courses also often fail to take into account the cognitive dissonance that their content sparks in White educators who have been socialized not to notice race (Gorski, 2009). This dissonance, though, is part of the quintessential American experience. Since its founding, the United States has wrestled with the fact that its founders believed all men created equal, yet themselves owned slaves. For centuries, non-White, non-male Americans have endured identity-based discrimination while being told they are equal. School children pledge allegiance each morning to a country that mythologizes hard work yet face disparate and race-based outcomes in their achievement. Conflicting cognitions (thoughts) plague those who wish to believe in the United States as a bastion of equality and meritocracy, yet confront daily evidence to the contrary (Halley, Eshleman, & Vijaya, 2011).

The experience of educators and students in a large suburban Mid-Atlantic school district and site of this study is no different. A White instructional specialist claims to be "passionate about learning and equity" on her public Twitter page, yet her family and friend-filled Facebook feed is devoid any mention of race. An experienced Black assistant principal speculates that she needs to learn about "this equity sh.t" in order to further advance her career. A White male administrator claims the moniker of "equity warrior," yet has a Black female student arrested for watching a fight and refusing to disperse on his command. Students in the Carver Public Schools District (a pseudonym) experience educators who publicly champion equity, yet fail to examine the disconnection between their words and their practice. These conflicts in word and deed are examples of cognitive dissonance theory and the focus of this investigation.

The Carver Public Schools District is a demographic microcosm of the U.S. Its student population is rapidly diversifying while its teaching core is not. Given its stated core value of equity, Carver partnered with the district's educators' association and a local college to create a fifteen-credit graduate program to help its staff develop the needed knowledge and skills to serve its student population. For Carver's White in-service educators who have self-selected into this graduate MTE certificate program, their ability to successfully navigate Whiteness in order to develop non- or anti-racist White racial identities (WRI) is tantamount. Each course in the program pushes them to name, analyze, and eventually re-conceptualize their Whiteness (Andersen, 2003) in order to better meet the needs of students from racial outgroups. The problem under study is how best to promote White participants' uncomfortable but necessary WRI development, while helping them to navigate this discomfort and complete the entire certificate program.

Theoretical Framework: Whiteness Studies

Whiteness as a concept is difficult to define, ever changing, and mostly invisible to those who possess it. It can be considered as identity, self-concept, set of social practices, group ideology, and a system of hegemony and racial domination (Andersen, 2003). As a theoretical framework, it has deep historical roots, though the recent emergence of formal whiteness studies in the late 1980s and 1990s supports the notion that whiteness and the study of it evolve in response to both social movements and social change (Doane, 2003). Conceptually, whiteness is problematic because of its connection to the notion of race, which social scientists generally accept as having no biological but immense material value. Whiteness can be considered a *racial project* according to

sociologists Omi and Winant (2015) in that it is "simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial identities and meanings… and the ways in which both social structures and everyday experiences are racially organized based upon that meaning" (p. 125). Racial projects take many forms and often compete to define what race is and the role it plays. The fact that it remains a messy effort has not stopped whiteness from becoming the dominant racial project in U.S. society.

An interdisciplinary effort, whiteness studies draw on the legal, historical, cultural, anthropological, and educational fields. The sociological focus on whiteness as part of the study of race relations is more recent, coinciding with the rise of other critical approaches, such as critical race and gender theories (Doane, 2003). Progressive scholars concerned with social and racial transformation, critical theorists rejected traditional explanations and turned their attention toward asking and answering difficult questions about the role of race and power in society (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997). Driven by macro forces such as the shift in racial/ethnic demographics and social dynamics due to post-1970s immigration and the 1960s Civil Rights movement, critical whiteness scholars seek to re-conceptualize whiteness in the face of social change. Within academia, micro forces such as the self-interest of White intellectuals to maintain control of the study of race relations has shifted the sociological focus away from study of the racial outgroup and instead onto the White in-group. This reversed focus is political just as much as it is critical; whiteness studies often align with anti-racist politics in their focus on forcing Whites to confront and problematize their own race, racial dominance, and hegemony in order to better mobilize as a racial group and challenge racism (Doane, 2003). What whiteness studies lack in empirical grounding, they make up for in rich theoretical perspectives. The following review of the literature traces the historical and sociological

construction of whiteness, the expression of whiteness through the psychological concept of racial identity, and the normalization of White ideologies that impact the quality of education provided for students of color. Whiteness, WRI, and the resultant ideologies are explored as underlying causes and factors of the problem of practice under consideration.

Underlying Causes and Factors: A Review of the Literature

The causes underlying this problem of practice include historical, sociological and psychological factors. The construction of whiteness as a racial group is discussed from a historical perspective and also explored from a sociological view in terms of its invisibility, connection to privilege, and social construction in the context of a racially stratified social system. Whiteness is also explored through a psychological lens in terms of how the navigation of individual's racial identities and ideologies may trigger both cognitive dissonance and fragility for Whites. Next, the case is made for use of a multidisciplinary approach to whiteness and the problem under study, as White program participants lay claim to both individual racial identities as well as racial group ideologies. Finally, MTE is examined as an institution that shows promise in helping White in-service educators to deconstruct whiteness in order to best meet the needs of students hailing from diverse racial and cultural groups.

Historical and Sociological Factors

Historical factors. Historically, the construction of whiteness in the United States began with its initial colonization by European immigrants. In their early inception, the American colonies were home to a collection of immigrants with a variety of ethnic identities and a history of conflict between their European nations of origin. Though

many were united by a (Christian) religion, they remained divided along national and socioeconomic lines. The landowner reigned supreme in seventeenth century North America, regardless of his race. Historian Theodore Allen (1994) points to Bacon's Rebellion in 1676 as a moment in colonial America that elevated the salience of race in terms of social stratification. Bacon's rebel army of European- and Black-American bond laborers and freedman rose up in rebellion against the wealthy plantation elite and was able to successfully capture and burn the city of Jamestown to the ground (Allen, 1994). Realizing that their lives were not far better than those of the enslaved, poor laboring Europeans united with freed and enslaved Africans in hopes of ending their own oppression by the ruling class. The rebellion was eventually quashed but sparked new colonial policies designed to afford greater rights and privileges to poor White laborers in order to dissuade them from further collaborative rebellion with African-Americans. These poor Europeans were afforded the right to vote and own land in an effort to convince them that their interests were more closely aligned to those of the rich White ruling class than their similarly-oppressed Black brethren (Wise, 2007). The political reaction to Bacon's Rebellion represents the first time that Whiteness was employed to unite Europeans in an effort to defend a way of life that depended on a system of oppression through slavery and genocide (Thandeka, 1999). Doane (2003) summarizes this unlikely coalition of Whites across ethnic groups as a means to "legitimize dispossession, enslavement, and marginalization, and to neutralize opposition to elites by creating a basis for forging cross-class alliances within the dominant group" (p. 9). Poor White colonists were effectively convinced to endorse a newly created racial interest at the expense of their class interest.

The elite class strategy to separate the interests of indentured servants and landless free Whites from those of other economically disadvantaged racial groups (Takaki, 1993) led to centuries of race-based exclusion, discrimination and exploitation of non-White racial groups. In the face of decreased European immigration, White Americans have exchanged their *optional* ethnic identities (Waters, 1990) for membership in the dominant White racial group. The cost of this inclusion was the hardening of racial group boundaries in the service of White supremacy and the demand that Whites of all classes and ethnicities adopt prejudices against racial outgroup members and view them as biologically inferior (Doane, 2003). Doane argues that since the 1950s, whiteness has been in a period of both "crisis and transition," (p. 15) as marginalized racial groups have challenged notions of White dominance, demanded increased civil rights, and sought redress for past oppression. These challenges have called into question the historical legitimacy of the White monopoly on what is *American*, *normal*, and unquestioned, and made it harder for whiteness to remain an invisible and unexamined racial project. Attacks to the legitimacy of whiteness in the past 40 years have been met by what she calls the "defensive assertion of whiteness" (p. 15), or conservative-led movements to counter racial projects such as affirmative action and multiculturalism led by non-White racial groups. Recent history is rife with everything from overt expressions of White supremacy to a more subtle lack of White racial consciousness or colorblindness, but regardless of form, the function of whiteness to privilege one racial group at the expense of others remains.

Sociological factors. The historical demarcation of a White racial group supports the need to examine whiteness from a sociological perspective. Early commentary on the sociological nature of whiteness by Black sociologists (Du Bois, 1903) and writers

(Baldwin, 1963) went largely unnoticed, highlighting the invisibility of Whiteness and marginalization of voices of color (Doane, 2003). The study of racial group relations by White sociologists often treated Whiteness as a default category and focused on study of the racial other (Doane, 2003). The notable absence of a rich sociological conceptualization of whiteness leaves the interdisciplinary effort bereft of grounding in the study of racial stratification in the U.S. (Andersen, 2003). The landmark sociological studies (Frankenberg, 1993; Roediger, 1991) and commentaries (McIntosh, 2007) on whiteness are largely recent (Andersen, 2003). The lack of empirical study of whiteness reflects not only the messiness of the construct itself, but also the taken-for-granted and invisible nature of it. Andersen (2003) articulates a sociological approach to the study of whiteness with three key themes: (a) whiteness as invisible norm, (b) whiteness as system of privilege, and (c) the social construction of race.

Whiteness as invisible norm. Whiteness often remains completely invisible to those who possess it, a fact that is far from accidental. Nobel Laureate poet Toni Morrison describes "the gaze of whiteness as the unacknowledged norm" (1992, p. 90). The character of whiteness in the U.S. is often invisible, normalized, and *hegemonic*, or an expression of social or political dominance by the ruling group (Mead, 1973). Starting with the rise of the White racial group in colonial America, whiteness has functioned with a "taken-for-granted and invisible character [that] reinforces systems of advantage and disadvantage and … supports the hegemony of white power and class structure" (Andersen, 2003, p. 22). Sociologically, whiteness is conveyed through dominance of the White racial group. This dominance leads members of the White racial group to presume their cultural behaviors and patterns to be normal and right and a source of judgment when other racial groups fail to adhere to these unspoken norms (Andersen, 2003). Status

as the dominant racial group affords Whites the power to exist in a world in which their social position is viewed as natural, unquestioned, and relatively impervious to critique. In education, norms of White dominant culture such as rugged individualism, competition, orientation toward action and the future, Protestant work ethic, emotion- and conflict-avoidant communication style, and time orientation (Katz, 1999) permeate classroom and school-level policies and practices, rendering whiteness the lone valued perspective. The social location of Whites as the top of racial group stratification in the U.S. influences their ability to even perceive the dominance of their race; Nakayama and Krizek (1999) argue that whiteness has "affects the everyday fabric of our lives, but resists, sometimes violently, any extensive characterization that would allow for the mapping of its contours. It wields power yet endures as a largely unarticulated position" (p. 88). The invisibility of Whiteness is what allows the sociopolitical institutions to promote White interests while pretending them to be the interests of American society en masse (Doane, 2013).

Whiteness as system of privilege. Being blind to whiteness also blinds one to the privilege afforded by it as well. McIntosh's (2007) seminal work on White privilege compares it to an "invisible knapsack" of benefits due to one's racial group status; Delgado and Stefancic (1997) liken it to an "invisible bundle of expectations and courtesies" (p. xvii). Though study of White privilege and especially McIntosh's work found inclusion in teacher education courses, these treatments often neglect to consider the way whiteness works on institutional and structural levels to privilege those at the top of the racial group stratification (Sleeter & Owuor, 2011). Examining how society and institutions are structured in order to privilege and maintain whiteness is key to understanding the sociological nature of whiteness that operates beyond mere individual

benefit (Andersen, 2003). Mapping whiteness and privilege can provide members of the White racial group with the critical theory and language needed in order to examine their own complicity in racial stratification via racism, as well as tools to rethink their individual and group expressions of whiteness (Rodriguez, 1998).

The social construction of race. There is a need to move beyond a static conceptualization since whiteness and race in general are constantly evolving in a dynamic manner driven by prevailing sociopolitical forces (Doane, 2003). Though biology does not determine race, social relationships and their connection to political power do (Andersen, 2003). As Durkheim (1964) notes, "race can be both constructed and real in its consequences" (p. 13). As the numerically and socio-politically prevailing group, Whites in the U.S. enjoy dominant group status and have used their hegemony in order to control the racial order of American society (Doane, 2003). White Americans have deliberately constructed racial groups and put themselves atop the hierarchy, even though they are numerically on the decline according to recent demographic trends (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Race itself characterizes the social relationships between these groups that have unequal access to the power claimed by the dominant group; these inter-group relationships are structured along distinct boundaries and are designed to widen the social distance between the (Doane, 2003).

The creation of a White racial group involved deliberate construction of the racial *other*; non-white racial and ethnic groups who are unable to access the power and privilege claimed by the White racial group. As discussed previously, White colonists embraced their roles as wageworkers in an attempt to distinguish themselves as "not slaves" and in doing so, began a construction of whiteness and WRI that defines itself through demarcation of the racial other (Roediger, 1991). Aligning themselves to the elite

allowed working class Whites to tap into the material power afforded by Whiteness; though it failed to serve their class interests, adopting Whiteness provided them with access to racial privilege if not true political power. As the defining characteristic of it racial group, Whiteness exhibits "tremendous flexibility in redefining itself and group boundaries in order to maintain a dominant position (Doane, 2003, p. 9). A classic example of this flexibility is the ever-expanding inclusion of European ethnic groups into the White racial group despite their initial exclusion at the turn of the 20th century (Waters, 2010). If one examines Whiteness as a *virus* or *epidemic* infecting relationships between racial groups as well as their access to power and privilege, then its socially constructed nature allows for constant mutation despite threats to challenge or even eradicate it.

Identity, Ideology, and Institution

Dyson asserts whiteness as "identity, ideology, and institution" (as cited in Chennault, 1998, p. 300). Since as a construct, whiteness is fuzzy and resists operationalization and empirical study, there is a need to break it down into its component parts. What follows are the psychological factors related to whiteness including cognitive dissonance, white fragility, and racial *identity,* as well as a synthesis of the literature on whiteness as racial i*deology* (which is closely aligned to a sociological analysis of whiteness). Then, the argument is made to consider both the psychological and sociological aspects of whiteness in order to better capture how it functions within both the White individual and his racial group. Finally, MTE is examined as an *institution* that has the promise to problematize whiteness for educators, but often fails to live up to this obligation.

Psychological Factors

Cognitive Dissonance. Piaget (1950) described the concept of *cognitive disequilibrium* in which individuals encounter information that conflict with their existing schemas. Disequilibrium is an unpleasant mental state, which prompts individuals to seek resolution through reorganization of their schema to accommodate this new information and experience or return to equilibrium, or mental balance. In Piaget's (1977) model, a person is able to grow cognitively through assimilating or accommodating new information into pre-existing schema. Festinger's (1957) theory of *cognitive dissonance* further expands on the state of *disequilibrium* described by Piaget; the author argues that individuals who encounter conflicting attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors seek *cognitive consistency* in order to avoid disharmony or dissonance. Festinger studied a group of cult members after a predicted apocalypse failed to occur. Those less attached to the prophecy were able to more quickly resolve their cognitive dissonance by blaming themselves and their own foolishness. Strongly committed cult members claimed that their faith had saved them from the predicted apocalyptic flood; they resolved the conflict between their conviction (death is coming via a flood) and their behavioral reality (the flood did not come) by altering their beliefs in their own agency as faithful followers. A more classic example of cognitive dissonance is an individual who continues smoking (behavior) despite knowledge that smoking causes bodily harm (belief). Festinger (1957) speculates that cognitive dissonance can be resolved through seeking *cognitive consistency* in one of three ways: (a) change in behavior (e.g. smoker stops smoking), (b) acquire new information that outweighs dissonant belief (e.g. smoker asserts that scientific research has not definitely proven that smoking causes cancer), or (c) reduce the importance of the

cognition (e.g. smoker decides living a shorter, happy, smoke-filled life is more important that avoiding cancer and extending life expectancy).

Gorski (2009) notes that cognitive dissonance often features prominently in MTE as new information about race, racism, and oppression "collides with old prejudices-when new truths battles establish beliefs for space in our consciousness" (p. 54). The perceived incompatibility of the new information causes participants to engage a variety of defense mechanisms, especially when new learning conflicts with their privileged identities. Educators bring with them a variety of conceptualizations about race, ethnicity, culture, and their impact on education (Akiba, 2011; Garmon, 2005). They have engaged in long apprenticeships (McDiarmid & Price, 1990) not only of teaching and learning, but also about race and how it functions in U.S. society. Many White educators have been socialized to believe in the myth of meritocracy (Milner, 2012), or that hard work and equal opportunity allow anyone to succeed. They also may engage colorblind or deficit ideologies to explain the achievement of their students from different racial and cultural groups (Valencia, 1997). Cognitive dissonance may occur with something as seemingly benign as being presented with a definition of racism that indicates its structural nature as opposed to just behaviors or beliefs of an individual (Hoyt, 2012).

Studies of cognitive dissonance in teacher education courses indicate that excessive dissonance or disequilibrium can be counter-productive to attainment of course outcomes around social justice. Since teacher education courses are still populated by predominantly White women with working- or middle-class backgrounds, navigating their cultural isolation and potentially stereotypic, racist, and prejudiced attitudes toward racial others remains a key task for course instructors (McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2001). In the context of coursework designed to promote racial identity development, cognitive

dissonance may be a threat to participants' multiple and intersecting identities. They may fear that integration of new knowledge about race may isolate them intellectually and emotionally from their own racial and cultural groups (McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2001). Piaget (1977) suggests that both experiencing and reducing cognitive dissonance are key tasks in learning; but White participants' motivation to reduce dissonance, especially in an MTE course, may depend on the magnitude of the dissonance as well as the individual's motivation to resolve it. In order to promote integration of new knowledge, MTE instructors can attempt to increase the importance of the learning, but ultimately it remains up to the learner whether or not to accept it and resolve the dissonance (McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2001).

McFalls and Cobb-Roberts (2001) studied the impact of cognitive dissonance on the learning of 124 undergraduate education majors enrolled in an MTE course. One group (n=64) received explicit instruction in cognitive dissonance theory and used it as a tool to reflect on provocative course texts and discussions, while the comparison group did not. Approximately 90% (n=54) of the experimental group was able to elaborate on the dissonance provoked by an article, or that no dissonance was produced because they already agreed with the author's assertions. These results prompted the authors' to coin the term *metadissonance*, the notion that a learner is aware of experiencing mental discomfort due to discrepant information. They conclude that explicit instruction about the theory of cognitive dissonance may help learners to not outright reject information incompatible with their existing schemas.

Houser, Parker, Rose, and Goodnight (2010) studied the cognitive dissonance of 123 undergraduate pre-service educators enrolled in two social studies methods courses. They explicitly taught about the theory of cognitive dissonance and asked students to

reflect on which course activities and materials provoked it and how dissonance contributed to or detracted from personal growth throughout the course. The authors speculated about their ability to balance participants' need for both safety and dissonance in order to learn new information and that excessive disequilibrium or dissonance would be counterproductive to learning. Their findings indicate a lack of a "neat dichotomy" (p. 17) between the provision of safety and dissonance in the classroom, and that the relationship between the two is actually complex, dynamic, and subject to continual renegotiation by both instructors and participants. The results of this study support Gorski's (2009) assertion that participants' dissonance in reaction to psychological stimuli falls along a continuum between unquestioned acceptance of new knowledge and outright rejection of it through the donning of "intellectual armor" (p. 54). Gorski (2009) recommends that the MTE instructor aim for the middle; a place where students neither blindly accept or reject new knowledge, but grapple with it in order to integrate it into their existing schema.

White Fragility. When the topic of race comes up, the cognitive dissonance it raises for Whites often exemplifies what DiAngelo (2011) deems "white fragility". She argues that Whites are mostly illiterate when it comes to thinking critically about race, and hold tight to emotional, yet relatively uninformed opinions. Whites find challenges to these opinions and their Whiteness stressful and have low tolerance for any perceived discomfort arising from these confrontations to their colorblind racial ideologies. When faced with threats to their worldview, Whites often withdraw from the conversation, defend their stance, argue, minimize, or even ignore the issue, because acknowledging their racial power and privilege is seen as a threat to their socialized sense of entitlement and superiority. Whites will do whatever is necessary to maintain their racial comfort and

their identity of "good" and "moral" even in the face of conflicting information (DiAngelo, 2011).

White Racial Identity (WRI). As Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) note, "Identity is not something one has, but something that develops during one's whole life" (p. 107). Psychologist Janet Helms created the most cited and studied model of WRI. Though it has been revised since its 1990 inception, Helm's model is grounded in the notion that Whites' journey toward a non-racist identity requires movement through six *statuses* that each represents a different way of processing racial information. She describes the statuses akin to different sets of *eyeglasses* that each alters how their wearer perceives and receives racialized information (Helms, 2014). Each set of glasses represents a different schema (Piaget, 1936), which is both a type of knowledge as well as a means of processing new knowledge; in this case, racial information. Growth through these WRI statues requires the individual to deconstruct his whiteness, and can be seen as a process of cognitive growth or development, as the individual learns new ways of processing racial information. The development of one's racial identity is closely linked to his affiliation to a socially created racial group (Omi & Winant, 2015). Whiteness is the defining characteristic of the White racial group, though it has "remained invisible as it continues to influence the identity of those both within and without its domain" (Nakayama and Martin, 1999, p. 88)

Blinded by whiteness, the individual beginning WRI development in Helms' (1990) model possesses a racist identity and must grapple with notions of colorblindness, privilege, and various forms of racism (individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural) in order to advance toward a more positive identity. Helms' six statuses of WRI (see Figure 1.1) are often divided into two distinct phases: Phase I, dedicated to the

abandonment of racism, consisting of the Contact, Disintegration, and Reintegration statuses; and Phase II, redefinition of a positive WRI, consisting of the Pseudo-Independent, Immersion-Emersion, and Autonomy statuses (Constantine, Watt, Gainor, & Warren, 2005). These statuses are not rigid but rather circular and fluid, and Whites move back and forth between them depending on how they process information received about race (Helms, 2014).

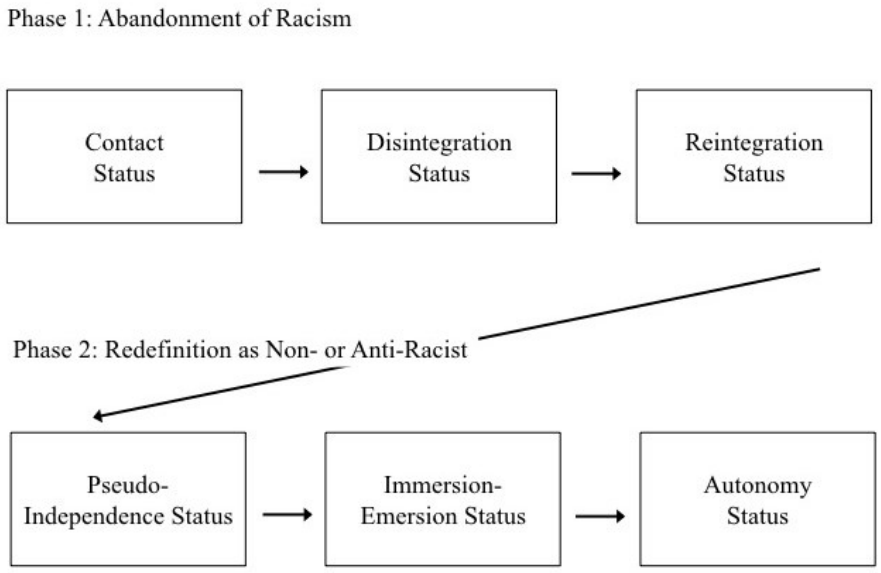

Figure 1 Helms' Six WRI Statuses Across Two Phases

Phase I of WRID. Phase I of Helms' (1990) WRI development model consists of three phases- Contact, Disintegration, and Reintegration. Given their demographic dominance, Whites have the luxury of self-segregation and thus may never have to question their racial identities. In general, Whites in Phase I aim to avoid feeling badly or guilt for being White and do so by laboring under delusions of their own superiority and the inferiority of other races (Michael, 2015). Their lack of physical contact with people of other races leads to a state of naiveté in which racial difference is either ignored or deemed unimportant (Helms, 1984). Helms first naïve phase of WRI, "Contact," is aptly-

named in that an encounter with a non-White person can lead to curiosity or confusion, as previously-held (and uniformed) beliefs about race are called into question. This phase involves a lack of awareness of race, racism, and privilege, as well as limited interaction with non-Whites. This lack of "contact" with those of other races often leads Whites in this phase to evaluate people of color using White standards, to respond to racism with denial and to unknowingly engage in racist behavior. Helms' (1990) Contact status involves a lack of awareness of race, racism, and privilege.

When an individual is in the Disintegration status of WRI, his "idealized image of the world disintegrates" (Michael, 2015, p. 46). Notions of colorblindness disappear as the individual is forced to accept not only his Whiteness but also a growing awareness that racism exists and that he may perpetuate it unknowingly. An individual in the phase is caught between a newfound responsibility to work against racism and the realization that doing so may lead to being ostracized by other racist Whites (Helms, 1984). The individual's increasing knowledge of racism often triggers sadness and pain about the loss of one's previously idealistic worldview. People in the Disintegration phase often wrestle with cognitive dissonance from the juxtaposition of their new racial awareness and their previously held beliefs. Helms' (1984) identifies three paths for an individual working through the Disintegration phase: (a) to over-identify with Black culture and try on its customs and behaviors "like how one puts on a new coat," (p. 156); (b) to adopt a paternalistic manner of trying to protect Blacks from racism; or, (c) to attempt to revert back into earlier naiveté about race. The first two options, Helms (1984) notes, lead to rejection by either Black or White peers, or both. The individual who attempts to revert can only do so by resegregating and ignoring racial difference.

The final status in Phase I of WRI is Reintegration, which exemplifies the notion of White fragility. In this status, individuals attempt to reintegrate their prior idealized worldview in order to avoid the pain and guilt causes by their new awareness of racism and its impact. "Behaviorally, this stage is characterized by a tendency to stereotype while affectively it is characterized by fear or anger," (Helms, 1984, p. 156). Feelings of sadness and blame often morph into anger and blame in this status, as the individual engages in emotional self-protection, and they often avoid people of color, idealize Whiteness, and engage in overtly racist behaviors (Michael, 2015). Whites in this phase tend to avoid cross-racial interaction or deal with it in a hostile manner. In order to move past this phase, Whites must resume cross-racial interaction, grapple with their feelings and attitudes about being White, and in time, the feelings of anger and fear will dissipate (Helms, 1984).

Racial Ideologies

Doane (2003) asserts that racial ideologies explain the relationships between racial groups while racial categories, or race itself, serve to reflect the placement of that group within a racially stratified set of relationships. Members of the (demographically and numerically) dominant group leverage racial ideologies in order to justify existing social relationships, marginalize members of racial outgroups, and justify everything from exclusion to enslavement of the racial other (Doane, 2003). The following section details racial ideologies adopted by Whites as means to evade discussions of race and power and to blame non-White racial groups for their lack of success in education and other institutions.

Colorblind Racial Ideology (CBRI). Psychologist Beverly Daniel Tatum compares racism to smog: a toxic mix of race-based stereotypes, bias, and prejudice that

people of any race breathe in subconsciously (California Newsreel, 2003). Unfortunately, breathing in racial smog that prioritizes and normalizes Whiteness leaves White educators vulnerable to adoption of ideologies that support Whiteness, White supremacy, and White privilege. These ideologies are built on "assumptions [that] we take as universal truths, but that instead have been crafted by our own unique identities and experiences with the world" (Takacs, 2002). Given that White educators likely grew up in segregated neighborhoods and were tracked into segregated classes even in diverse schools, White educators bring very different backgrounds and experiences into the classroom than do the students they teach (Cochran-Smith, 2003). Gay (1993) posits that today's teachers and students "live in different existential worlds" (p. 287) consisting of radically different frames of references and perspectives. White educators often erroneously "assume that all students bring a similar socialization, one that corresponds closely to the experience of the dominant group" (Zeichner, et al., 1998, p. 166).

With roots in Justice John Marshall Harlan's dissent in Plessy v. Ferguson (Schofield, 2006), and Martin Luther King Jr.'s legendary "I Have a Dream" speech, colorblindness is the prevailing racial ideology in America even though it often promotes the anti-thesis of fairness (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). Often unknowingly, Whites employ a colorblind racial ideology (Neville, Awad, Brooks, Flores, & Bluemal, 2013) as their template for thinking about race and its impact. Whites have been socialized to avoid acknowledgement and discussion of race (Frankenberg, 1993) and thus their prevalent ideology about race is one that "serves to justify and explain away racial inequities in society" (Neville, et al., 2013, p. 458). Wellman (1977) argues "White people's common-sense understandings of race are ideologically defenses of their interest and privilege that stem from [their] position in a structure based in part on racial inequity" (p. 37). This

argument supports the notion that society is organized along "race-neutral structures" (Andersen, 2003, p. 23) and thus colorblind ideologies function to support and maintain the seemingly invisible advantage that Whites have as the dominant group in U.S. society.

Frankenberg (1993) asserts that Whites utilize two repertoires when engaging in a CBRI: color evasion and power evasion. Though both serve distinct purposes, they contribute to what she terms "the discourse of sameness" (p. 14) that often leads White educators to argue that all students have equal opportunities for success, that success is predicated solely on hard work, and that all students are essentially the same and that to argue otherwise is to engage in racist discourse. Understanding CBRI and how it functions for White educators is critical in that this perspective is widespread and built into both formal and informal school policy, and is mistakenly espoused as goal to be sought even though mounting evidence of structural and institutional racism prove the implausibility of colorblindness (Schofield, 2006).

Color-evasion. Frankenberg (1993) coined the term color-evasion to describe ways in which Whites express a desire not to see race. Color-evasion, as opposed to "colorblindness," implies that racial difference is seen but deliberately not acknowledged. Whites engage in color-evasion as a means to selectively "not see differences in race, culture and color" (p. 273). Frankenberg offers a generous rationale for this repertoire: that Whites engage in color-evasive thinking under the false ideal that color/race should not matter, though in reality, it does. In doing so, she argues, they are "confusing desire with reality" (p. 148). Wellman (1977) is less generous in noting the "paradox of White consciousness is the ability not to see what are very salient and visible markers of social categories that privilege people of European ancestry" (p. 246). Unfortunately, denying

the existence of race does little to reduce prejudice, as people adopting this ideology actually engage in more racially insensitive behavior than those who do not (Neville, et al., 2013). Hachfield, et al. (2011) surveyed over 750 pre-service or novice educators and found that espousing an egalitarian or colorblind ideology was linked to tendencies to engage in prejudiced behavior, be less accepting of cultural pluralism, and adopt an authoritarian teaching style.

White educators may emphasize sameness and deny racial disparities under the guise of fairness and aspiration toward a society free of racial prejudice. This line of thinking, though, does not negate the impact race has on the daily interactions they have with students, colleagues, parents, and other community members. They, like other Whites, have been socialized to avoid acknowledging race as a means to maintain the prevailing status quo: White dominance and perceived racial superiority. White teachers may claim to see all students as the same, but disaggregated data about academic achievement and student discipline prove the opposite: race does matter (Milner, 2012). Delpit (1995) warns, "If one does not see color, one does not really see children" (p. 177). While White teachers disingenuously ignore race, they actually communicate to their students of color that race is something best left unnoticed (Ullucci, 2007) even though it daily impacts the lives and achievement of these students.

Power-evasion. The other repertoire of CBRI that Frankenberg (1993) details is power-evasion, or a desire not to see racism. Power-evasion serves to minimize the existence of racism by denying the existence of (a) blatant forms of racism, (b) institutional racism, and (c) racial privilege. Power-evasion ignores issues of power when defining racism, and locates blame in individuals or groups, rather than in policies and practices that serve to maintain the status quo and White dominance. The color-evasive

educator may opine that she "doesn't care if a student is black, brown or purple polka-dotted," while the power-evasive educator fails to acknowledge the impact that classroom and school-level policies and practices have in perpetuating institutional racism.

Schofield (2006) chronicled her four-year study of a middle school in the Northeast U.S. whose student body was 50% White and 50% Black. In describing the observed functions and consequences of CBRI, Schofield noted that staff employed this ideology as a means to evade conflict and tension in an effort to protect the *fragile* institution and its people. Avoiding the topic of race was viewed as a means to avoid unfair accusations of discrimination even though their referral and suspension data proved that Black students were suspended four times as often as their White peers. Similarly, the staff employed CBRI in order to minimize potential discomfort and embarrassment they felt in not knowing about and/or having little experience with students from different racial backgrounds. In their view, "[when] race is perceived as a potential threat to a smooth, relaxed, and pleasant interaction, one way of handling that threat is to pretend to be unaware of the attributes it creates" (p. 284). Finally, Schofield discovered that staff was utilizing CBRI as a means to maintain their personal sense of themselves as egalitarian individuals not susceptible to biases and prejudices. One teacher even manipulated an SGA election so that a White male won instead of a Black female, and the school's CBRI ensured that the racial motivations and implications of this as well as other actions went unexamined.

Myth of Meritocracy. Rist (1970) defines the myth of meritocracy as the belief that through hard work and effort, all students have equal opportunities to succeed in school and life. This myth sets up a false dichotomy: that students who succeed are worthy of the privileges and benefits they receive because they worked hard to achieve

them, while students who fail do so because of a lack of effort or merit. The false notion of meritocracy in education supports both the color-evasive and power-evasive ideologies of CBRI. Schools maintain race neutrality, assuming that they are fair and race-neutral places (color-evasion) devoid of structural inequities (power evasion). This ideology allows school personnel to avoid acknowledging that a school's structures and processes actually create and maintain inequities along racial, language, class, or gender lines (Oakes & Saunders, 2008). Absolved from all responsibility and fully committed to the notion of meritocracy, schools are free to assign students to lower academic tracks and academic interventions and assign the blame for these placements onto the students themselves, and their lack of effort, motivation, or intelligence (Oakes, 1986).

Deficit Ideologies. Functioning similarly to the myth of meritocracy, deficit thinking mistakes *difference* for *deficit* (Gorski, 2011) and marginalizes non-European traditions and norms as deficient. This ideology functions to both explain and justify inequities in student achievement by attributing them to perceived deficiencies in the students' background and communities (Valencia, 1997; Yosso, 2005). Famed American anthropologist Margaret Mead wrestled with notions of White hegemony and how it produces false narratives about children who enter school with deficient background knowledge and who do not fit the one vision of education espoused by schools. Valencia (1997) estimates that the term deficit thinking itself was socially constructed in the 1960s alongside the notion of the culturally disadvantaged children who were subject to environmental deficits and cultural deprivation (p. xi). Deficit ideologies became the primary means to explain the persistent failure of children of color. Pearl (1997) argues that this line of thinking blames families as a source of pathology; they are to blame for the negative attitudes and lack of aspirations that plague their offspring and communities

at large. Those engaging in deficit thinking maintain that students of color are raised in families that are disorganized, noncompetitive, and anti-intellectual (Oakes, 1986). Deficient families and communities do not place value on education or the academic success of their students (Valencia & Solórzano, 1997).

Despite platitudes about success for all students, and vision/mission statements that codify this sentiment, deficit ideologies allow schools to leave unexamined potential institutional and structural inequities that may result in the opposite (Sleeter, 2005). Rooted in racism, classism, sexism, ignorance and pseudo-science, deficit ideology ignores structural issues such as school financing, segregation, tracking, curriculum and differentiation, and instead focuses on perceived internal deficiencies, such as cognitive ability, motivation, and linguistic ability, of the child. Though are overly simplistic and actually counterproductive to educational success (Valencia, 1997), deficit narratives are advanced as a rationale for engaging in interventions designed to fix students and their achievement. They allow educators to skirt issues like tracking, low expectations, disproportionality, and inappropriate family involvement activities that are within their purview (Gorski, 2011). Nelson and Guerra (2014) presented scenarios about curriculum, instruction and interaction with families to teachers and administrators and found that 83% of respondents engaged in deficit thinking, blaming students or their families for the conflict presented in the scenarios. Deficit thinking exemplifies power-evasive CBRI; it blames individual students and perceived defects due to their race, culture, and background, rather than educational structures designed to privilege and maintain the dominance of Whites.

In terms of this investigation, deficit thinking allows White educators to evade examination of how racism is structured institutionally, through school structures and

processes. By engaging in deficit narratives educators can ascribe student failure to "abstract entities" (Nespor, 1987, p. 321) and to "speak about students without explicitly revealing racial bias… pretend[ing] that skin color is not important" (Watson, 2011, p. 24). In this way, deficit thinking allows White educators to engage in both color- and power-evasive explanations of their lack of success with students from different racial and cultural groups.

Need for a Multidisciplinary Approach to the Study of Whiteness

Theoretically, this problem has been explored mainly through psychology as researchers have attempted to understand implicit racial attitudes (Baron & Banaji, 2006; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Greenwald & Krieger, 2006; Rudman & Goodwin, 2004) and reduce both prejudice and bias (Craig & Richeson, 2014; Devine, Forscher, Austin & Cox, 2012). In both the medical and education fields, efforts have been made to increase practitioners' cultural competence (Betancourt, Green, Carillo, & Ananeh-Firempong, 2003) in working with racial outgroups. Both of these approaches have been delimited from this investigation because they do not take into account the notion that race and racism have been socially constructed into the fabric of American society.

There is a danger of over-focusing study on individual White racial identities and ideologies; doing so renders the performance of whiteness as individual and ignores how it contributes to racial group stratification, including access to power and privilege (Andersen, 2003). As Sleeter (2005) notes, studies of individual attitude change in White teachers have mixed results and rarely capture the impact of these changes in classroom behavior. She argues that researchers should get out of people's heads and into analysis of how power and wealth is distributed across groups and how White Americans try to maintain supremacy in the face of attempts by people of Color to change it (Sleeter,

2005). Focus solely on the psychological aspects of whiteness also evokes the false notion that if Whites were just able to reduce their prejudice and reject their privilege, then racism would go away. Andersen (2003) instead argues, "racial identity is not just an individual process but involves the formation of social groups organized around material interests with their roots in social structure, not just individual consciousness" (p. 29-30). The marriage of both a psychological and sociological approach to understanding this problem allows for the study of the individual White educator's WRI and ideologies, but also an examination of how these educators work as a group to enact, maintain, and potentially work to dismantle whiteness in the context of an MTE program. These educators will not solve racism by merely *changing their minds* as individuals (Andersen, 2003); doing so will involve the study of racism's many manifestations, from the personal (internalized, interpersonal) to the political (institutional, structural) as first defined by sociologist James Jones (1972).

MTE: A Promise Unmet

As an institution, MTE has a critical role to play in destabilizing whiteness; to "expose, examine, and challenge it" (Andersen, 2003, p. 25). Scott and Mumford (2007) assert that while the era of *No Child Left Behind* education reform has championed equity and diversity in the abstract, it has fallen short of enacting policy that demands critical thinking and cultural competence on the part of educators. Even though MTE has lofty ideals, most studies of it have focused on only a single course or group using a pre- and post-course survey design. These studies have also been limited in that they fail to measure which course characteristics that have the greatest influence on changing educator beliefs (Akiba, 2011). Most MTE courses do little to address colorblind ideologies and deficit narratives about student achievement. Gorski's (2009) review of 45

MTE course syllabi revealed that only about a quarter of these courses prepared teachers in a manner consistent with principles of multicultural education, and most failed to help participants critique the systems of power and privilege that contribute to long-standing racialized educational inequities. MTE courses and programs have the opportunity to interrupt educator's stereotypical ideas about students, their families, and communities. Unfortunately, many do not.

Swartz (2003) notes that many White teachers enter the profession with little awareness of race, racism, and cultural strengths of the communities they will serve. Their MTE, she argues, often grounds itself in Eurocentric curriculum and pedagogy, which does little to counter deficit ideologies and their idea of success achieved through meritocracy. Leonardo's (2011) study of ideologies and discourse in education finds that MTE programs often allow White candidates to "re-center Whiteness" (p. 681) by failing to engage them in analysis of the impact of colorblindness, whiteness, and privilege, and how the three function to maintain power through policies and practices enacted in the educational institution. Ladson-Billings (2000) critiques the ability of MTE to prepare educators to work effectively with African American students in that present approaches allow teachers to view African-American students from a deficit perspective and rely on generic, colorblind pedagogical models. Nelson and Guerra (2014) presented nine scenarios about curriculum, instruction and interacting with diverse students and families to 111 teachers and educational leaders. They found that 83% of respondents had general, little, or no awareness of the cultural dimensions presented in the scenarios, and most engaged in deficit thinking, blaming students and their families for described conflicts. The authors argue that addressing deficit thinking may be a key school improvement strategy but that leaders may not have the knowledge or capacity to do so.

Sleeter (2005) studied 30 in-service educators who taught in diverse school settings and completed nine all-day in-service MTE trainings during their first and second years of employment. Through observations and interviews, she analyzed what practitioners were learning from MTE, how they made sense of the content, and how they related it to their understanding and instruction of non-White students. Her results indicate align with the tenets of critical race theory as participants (a) resisted acknowledging the saliency of race and instead endorsed colorblind notions of achievement, (b) expressed belief in a meritocracy that rewards hard work and provides equal opportunity, and (c) retained a deficit view of student achievement that normalized the existence of an achievement gap. These findings support the CRT assertion that Whites refuse to acknowledge race and racism and how it works through the educational institution to provide both tangible and covert advantages for their racial group.

MTE often fails to help educators develop an understanding of how racism has been institutionalized into American education and how it continues to create and perpetuate inequities (Sleeter, 2008). Aveling (2006) argues that MTE has the power to help educators to critically deconstruct their Whiteness and evolve toward being explicitly antiracist in their beliefs and practices. Milner (2012) offers a framework for inquiry into whiteness and its impact on educator beliefs, one that purposely counters the prevailing notion of an achievement gap for students of color. His "Opportunity Gap Explanatory Framework" requires educators to unpack the influence of colorblindness, cultural conflicts, myth of meritocracy, deficit mindsets, low expectations, and context-neutral mindsets and practices in order to identify policies, practices and structures that contribute to the lack of opportunities for students. Milner's framework directly addresses core features of Whiteness (colorblind racial ideologies, Phase I WRI statuses, and deficit

mindsets) that impede White educators' abilities to successfully educate students who are racially and culturally different.

Programs that embrace Milner's framework must transcend the traditional focus on strategies and technical instructional practices and programs designed to "fix" students (Garcia & Guerra, 2004; Henze & Arriaza, 2006; Nelson & Guerra, 2014) and instead create environments and opportunities for White participants to question, analyze, and critique their implicit racial beliefs about themselves and students (Pohan & Mathison, 1999). Milner (2003) advocates that reflection and dialogue can be leveraged to promote "conscious, effortful thinking that invites teachers to continually and persistently reflect on themselves as racial beings in order to better understand themselves in relation to others' racial identities, issues, and experience, and reject commonly held stereotypes" (p. 176).

Conclusion

Whiteness is a complex and messy phenomenon that has multidisciplinary roots. It presents itself in the form of identity (WRI), and ideology (CBRI, deficit, myth of meritocracy). In the education institution, members of the dominant White racial group make key decisions in terms of curricula, pedagogy, and policy, which all serve to reinforce their culture which is both hegemonic, or normalized, and largely invisible to them. The next chapter will continue exploration of whiteness as identity and ideology within the institutional context of a graduate MTE certificate program designed for in-service educators.

Chapter 2: The Problem in Context

In order to further examine the nature of this problem in the context of the MTE graduate certificate program, two needs assessment studies were conducted. The first needs assessment study was conducted in spring of 2015. Its purpose was to identify respondents' level of WRI as well as their identification with corresponding colorblind or deficit ideologies. After completion of that study and the close of the semester, programmatic issues arose in the program that demanded further exploration and thus a second needs assessment study was conducted across both semesters of the 2015-2016 academic year. The purpose of this second study was to identify factors that led White in-service educators to drop out of the program before its completion.

Context of the Studies

The racial gap between educators and their students is reflected in the professional staff of the large suburban Carver Public Schools (pseudonym) district, which is 78.9% female and 75.7% White. About 88% of the professional staff has five or more years of experience, 46% with more than 15 years of experience. Though 87.2% of classes are taught by highly qualified teachers as defined by the *No Child Left Behind Act,* there remains a persistent gap in the achievement of Black and Latino students when compared to their White and Asian peers. The district is now majority minority, as only 32% of the approximately 151,000 students classify themselves as White. Black (21.4%) and Latino (27.4%) students together comprise the racial and ethnic majority of students, yet their achievement lags. Forty-one percent of Black students and 37.5% of Latino students successfully complete Algebra 1 with a grade of "C" or better by the end of 8th grade compared to 76.6% of Whites and 80.9% of Asian students enrolled in the same courses

(Carver Public Schools, 2014). Though the overall graduation rate of approximately 90% is increasing overall and the gap between racial/ethnic groups is closing, graduation rates for Black students (86.4%) and Latino students (80.0%) still lag behind their White (95.2%) and Asian (97.0%) counterparts.

All educators in the district are required to take at least one 3-credit multicultural course as a condition of their employment. The district offers two courses about ethnic groups and multicultural education designed to meet this contingency. Educators who enter the district having completed a 3-credit multicultural or comparable course from a pre-service teacher preparation program have already fulfilled this requirement. In terms of supporting educators in the development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed in order work with diverse populations, school-based leaders may consult with district-level equity specialists (including the researcher), and also enroll in optional two to five-day long training modules designed to promote racial equity in the schoolhouse. Beyond the multicultural course employment contingency, engaging in additional coursework or consulting an equity specialist is voluntary, and thus many schools and educators have not taken advantage of this opportunity.

The context of this study is a 15-credit graduate certificate program designed to engage educators in ending the predictability of achievement by race and ethnicity. The program is a collaborative effort between Carver Public Schools, the educators' union, and a local college. Five cohorts comprised of 75 educators, including teachers of all levels, counselors, social workers, occupational and speech-language therapists, as well as central office directors and specialists have successfully completed the program. There are currently 24 educators in the sixth and seventh cohorts, with two additional certificate cohorts launching each fall, in addition to a full master's program for those who have

completed the certificate and wish to extend their studies. The target population included past and current White participants in the certificate program. Given that Carver Public Schools' professional staff is 75.7% White, focusing on this population provides potential for the greatest impact. Of the past and current participants, 36 are White, making them the focus of these needs assessment studies.

Needs Assessment Study I

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the first needs assessment was to probe the identities and ideologies of White participants enrolled in a graduate MTE program. The study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1. What types of ideologies do educators engage in when analyzing the impact of race in general and on education?

RQ2: What ideologies do White educators engage to explain the achievement of students of color?

RQ3. Do MTE courses help White educators develop a more advanced racial identity that reflects rejection of colorblind and deficit ideologies?

Method

Research Design

This first needs assessment study employed a quantitative research design and used convenience sampling, or nonrandom selection procedure (Soriano, 2013). All White current and former program participants were asked to complete a survey containing closed, semi-structured, and open-ended questions (Soriano, 2013).

Participants. Participants were recruited electronically and in person and provided informed consent before completing an online questionnaire. Of the 36 potential respondents, 21 participated, yielding a 57% response rate. Respondents were divided into two groups: those who had completed the entire certificate program (henceforth called "Cohort 1") and those still enrolled in the program ("Cohort 2"). Cohort 1 had 22 possible respondents; 10 participated for a 45% response rate. Cohort 2 had 14 possible respondents; 11 participated for a 79% response rate. The overall sample size for the survey was 21 White educators across both cohort groups. Over half of the respondents had between 10 and 19 years of teaching experience, with another quarter of the sample having between 5 and 9 years of experience. Most of the respondents were female (76%) which matches the demographics of the program and of the school district itself.

Measures or instrumentation. The online questionnaire measured the three key variables associated with this problem including (a) deficit ideologies, (b) CBRI and, (c) WRI. Deficit ideologies are defined as ways of thinking about achievement gaps that draw on racial and class bias in order to blame students, their families, and their culture for their lack of success. These ideologies were assessed using an open-ended question in which respondents were asked to explain a graph showing a gap in achievement between Black and Latino students and their White and Asian peers. Respondent answers to this question were coded as to whether they located the blame for student failure on students and their family background, or whether they acknowledged factors within the scope of the educational institution as responsible.

CBRI are defined as both color-evasive (desire not to acknowledge race) and power-evasive (desire not to acknowledge racism). Both forms of CBRI were assessed through a 5-point Likert scale statements that probed respondents' understanding of racial

privilege (which functions to maintain color-evasive ideologies) and institutional discrimination (which functions to promote power-evasive ideologies). Respondents indicated agreement with statements such as "My race has a daily impact on my life" (disagreement associated with color-evasion) and "Social policies, such as affirmative action, discriminate unfairly against White people" (agreement indicative with power-evasion).

WRI is defined along six distinct statuses that each represent how Whites process racialized information or experiences. People with Lower-level WRIs are more likely to endorse colorblind and deficit ideologies. WRI was assessed using items drawn from Helms' and Carter's (1990) White Racial Identity Attitudes Scale, three Likert scale statements per status, for a total of 18 statements. Respondents who agreed with statements associated with lower-level WRI, such as "A person's race is not important to me," or "Society may have been unfair to Blacks, but it has been just as unfair to Whites" are more likely to endorse color- or power-evasive ideologies and subscribe to deficit narratives about student achievement.

Procedure

Data collection methods. This study collected both quantitative and qualitative data using a 38-item online questionnaire. The tool included three demographic questions (race, years teaching experience, and program cohort group), three open-ended questions probing deficit and color-blind ideologies, and 32 statements to which participants responded using a 5-point Likert scale to indicate their level of agreement from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The 18 Likert-style items assessing WRI were taken from the WRIAS (Helms & Carter, 1990), and the other 14 were drawn from multiple assessments of colorblind/racial ideologies, including the Colorblind Racial

Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS; Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000), the Diversity Awareness Survey (DAS; Pohan & Aguilar, 2001), and the White Privilege Attitudes Scale (WPAS; Pinterits, et al., 2009).

Data analysis. Descriptive statistics (item-specific means) were calculated for closed Likert-style survey questions. Using responses to WRIAS questions, Cronbach's alphas were calculated for each subscale in response to literature detailing a lack of internal consistency within WRIAS subscales (Behrens, 1997). Responses to open-ended survey questions designed to probe racial ideologies (colorblind and deficit) were coded for patterns and trends.

Findings

Results are organized by research question with supporting quantitative and qualitative data highlighted in the included tables and figures.

Research Question 1. What types of ideologies do educators engage in when analyzing the impact of race in general and on education?

On an open-ended question asking participants to record as many factors of diversity as they could think of, respondents listed a total of 23 different factors. When asked to identify which of these factors most defined their identities, respondents listed 21 different factors, the most popular responses including gender (n = 18), race (n=13), and religion (n=7) (see Figure 2.1). Race was the second-most identified factor of diversity impacting an individual respondent's identity. The difference between the two cohorts in terms of identification of race as one of the top three identify-defining factors was not found to be statistically significant ($t = 0.29$, $p = 0.39$)

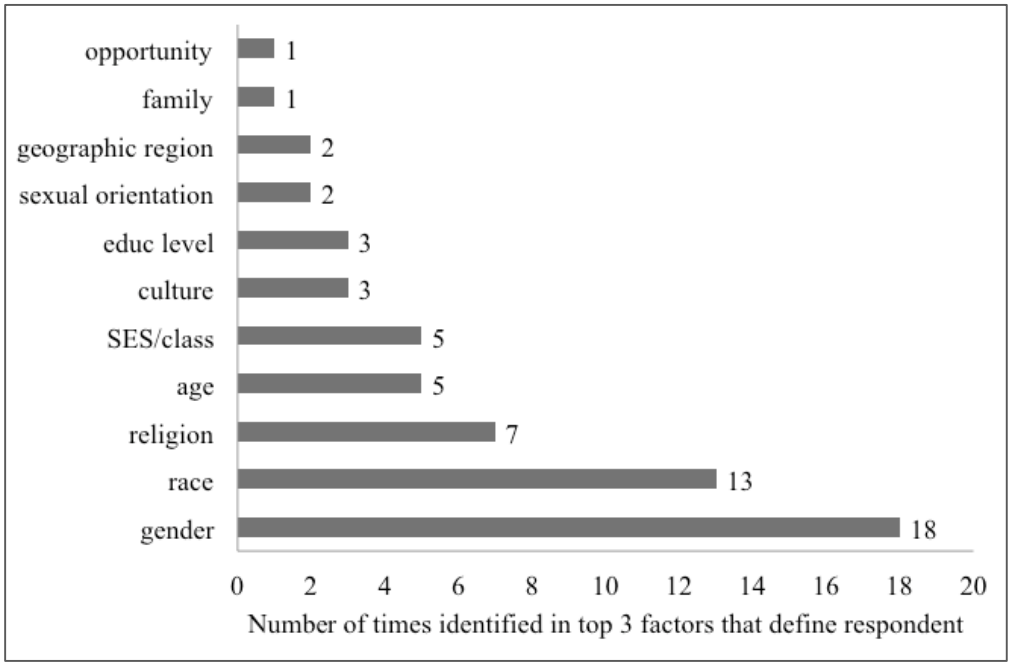

Figure 2 Top Three Factors of Diversity

Research Question 2. What ideologies do White educators engage to explain the achievement of students of color?

When asked to explain the reason for the gap in achievement between Black and Latino students and their White and Asian peers, respondents from both cohorts engaged deficit ideologies in their explanations. Two respondents from Cohort 1 (20%) and seven respondents from Cohort 2 (64%) identified factors that blamed students, their families, and their backgrounds for their lack of educational success (Table 2.1). Cohort 2, then still engaged in the program, was more likely to rely on deficit ideologies to explain these gaps than Cohort 1, though the difference in between the cohorts in terms of reliance on these deficit ideologies to explain gaps was not found to be statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ ($t = 1.66$, $p = 0.06$).

Table 1 Factors Identified Indicative of a Deficit Ideology (Cohorts 1 and 2)

Factor	Times Identified by Cohort 1	Times Identified by Cohort 2
Students' Language	1	4
Student Absences	1	0
Neighborhood	0	1
Family Educational Background	0	2
Marking Period	1	0
Support at Home	1	0
Students' Race	0	2
Students' Socioeconomic Status	0	3

Overall agreement levels with items measuring racial privilege and institutional discrimination (elements of CBRI) were high, indicating that respondents failed to endorse colorblindness, including color- and power-evasion.

Research Question 3. Do MTE courses help White educators develop a more advanced racial identity?

Previous studies using the WRIAS (Constantine, et al., 2005; Puchner, et al., 2012) opted not to measure a respondent's exact WRI status using Helms' subscales. Instead, the authors chose to follow Helms' (1999) lead and to classify the first three racial identity statuses as "Phase 1" and the second three racial identity statuses as "Phase 2". Specifically, the authors looked at the whether or not the respondent's scores were highest on the *Pseudo-Independence*, *Immersion/Emersion*, and *Autonomy* scales which would indicate a WRI in Phase 2. If they were not highest in the categories, the respondent's WRI was deemed to be in Phase 1. The 18 WRIAS questions included in this questionnaire (three per WRI status) were scored using the same procedure, so that each respondent was deemed to have a Phase 1 or Phase 2 WRI based on where their highest scores fell on the WRIAS subscales.

All respondents were assessed to have a Phase II WRI based on their prevailing agreement with statements indicative of the Pseudo-Independence, Immersion-Emersion, and Autonomy statuses (Table 2.2). One participant in each cohort respectively indicated agreement with several statements indicative of a Phase I WRI (Contact and Disintegration statuses), though they too indicated agreement with higher statuses of WRI in other questions.

Table 2 Frequency and percentage of respondents in each WRI status by cohort

WRI Status	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
Contact	0 (0%)	1 (9%)
Disintegration	0 (0%)	1 (9%)
Reintegration	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Pseudo-Independence	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Immersion-Emersion	10 (100%)	11 (100%)
Autonomy	4 (40%)	9 (82%)

Note. In Cohort 2, 2 respondents were evaluated to have both a Phase I WRI (Contact or Disintegration status) in addition to a Phase II WRI (Immersion-Emersion or Autonomy status). This is possible due to the WRIAS' ability to identify both dominant and recessive statuses for the same respondent. In both of these cases, the respondent's dominant status was a Phase II WRI (Immersion-Emersion or Autonomy) and their recessive status was a Phase I WRI (Contact or Disintegration).

An independent samples t-test was used to compare for significance of the difference between Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 in terms of identified phase of WRI (Phase I or II) (Table 2.3). The results indicate no initial significance between the cohorts in terms of WRI as measured by the WRIAS.

Table 3 Phase I versus phase II WRI in both cohorts

WRI Phase	Cohort 1 *M (SD)*	Cohort 2 *M (SD)*
WRI Phase I Items	1.66 (0.37)	2.16 (0.37)
WRI Phase II Items	3.25 (1.48)	3.39 (1.12)

Significant difference was found was between the cohorts when assessing their agreement with any items indicative of a Phase I WRI (items indicative of a Contact,

Disintegration, or Reintegration phase WRI) ($t = 2.99$, $p = .003$). Cohort 1 participants were less likely to endorse statements indicative of a Phase I, or more racist, WRI.

Significant difference was also found between the cohorts in terms of their complete rejection of items indicative of a Phase I WRI (items indicative of a Contact, Disintegration, or Reintegration phase WRI). An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine difference between the groups in terms of which had more respondents with zero, or no, agreements with Phase I WRI items and this difference was found to be significant ($t = 2.08$, $p = .03$). Cohort 1 participants were more likely to have disagreed with all nine items indicative of a Phase I WRI.

Discussion and Limitations

With regards to endorsement of deficit and colorblind ideologies about race and its impact on education, more than one-third of respondents failed to identity race as a significant factor in how they define their identity. This data leads credence to the notion Whites are trained not to see or discuss race (Andersen, 2003; Doane, 2003; Frankenberg, 1993) and are thus prone to adopt and endorse colorblind explanations of identity and achievement. Thirty-eight percent of respondents expressed deficit ideologies when explaining the racialized achievement gap, indicating an ignorance of structural issues, such as housing and school segregation, tracking, and curricular and pedagogical practices that contribute to this gap. Instead, these respondents located blame for depressed academic achievement in the child himself, and perceived deficiencies such as language, motivation, race, class and culture. Unfortunately, self-selection bias renders it impossible to tell if the program attracts participants who are less likely to engage in

deficit or colorblind ideologies, or if it actually helps to decrease participants' reliance on these notions over time.

The question of whether MTE courses help White educators to develop a more advanced racial identity is unable to be answered presently given the scope of this exploration. All respondents expressed agreement with statements indicative of a Phase II WRI, though those who have completed the program were more likely to reject all statements indicative of a Phase I, or racist, WRI. The data collected about WRI phase and status led to further questions (Are Whites with more advanced WRI more likely to voluntarily participate in MTE courses?) for the researcher rather than conclusive answers about the impact that this program has on participants' development of a Phase II, or anti-racist WRI.

There are several sample and design limitations within this study that restrict the researcher's ability to conclusively address the research questions guiding it. A major limitation is the relatively small sample size of the treatment group (White current or past participants in the certificate program) and failure to employ a similarly constituted control or comparison group of White educators within the school district for all measured constructs. A threat to internal validity includes the low levels of internal consistency within the WRIAS subscales; Cronbach's alphas for the nine Phase I WRI and nine Phase II WRI items were .74 and .46 respectively. Though this study did not call for computation of an individual respondent's specific phase of WRI as Contact, Disintegration, Reintegration, Pseudo-Independence, Immersion-Emersion, or Autonomy, the Cronbach alphas for each subscale indicated a lack of internal reliability within the subscales (α=.36, α=.49, α=.42, α=.25, α=.46, α=.26 respectively). This lack of internal consistency within WRIAS subscales may have been exacerbated by the fact that

this study measured only three items per subscale, rather than the traditional 10 per subscale on the original WRIAS. Another limitation includes the potential of respondents to select responses due to their social desirability, or due to a desire to please the expectations of the researcher, whom they all know.

The quantitative and qualitative data collected indicate that respondents' enrollment and participation in a 15-credit graduate certificate program *may* impact racial identities and ideologies. Due to nature of the data collection timeline in this investigation, it was not possible to collect both pre- and post-program measures of these constructs. Future collection of this data will allow for exploration of the impact that the MTE certificate program has on these variables and will also include study of curricular and pedagogical choices that help to decrease reliance on colorblind or deficit ideologies, as well as work to improve WRI toward an anti-racist status.

Needs Assessment Study II

Statement of Purpose

The second study was guided by the following overarching question: Why do participants drop out of an MTE program? This broad question has been further divided into the following sub-questions:

RQ1. What reasons do program drop outs give for their attrition?

RQ2. Do reasons for attrition vary by race/ethnicity?

RQ3. Which program elements impact participant attrition?

Review of the Related Literature

Factors Impacting Attrition

Student attrition is often viewed as a marker of the overall health of a program as there exists a connection between student satisfaction and attrition (Rice, Rojjanasrirat, & Traschel, 2013). When probed, students' reasons for attrition likely fall into two main categories: factors that are personal, and those that are academic, or program-related (Rice, Rojjanasrirat, & Traschel, 2013; Willging & Johnson, 2004). Personal factors include family, health, financial, work or career responsibilities, goals, and demographic inputs (race, socioeconomic status, age, gender, immigration status, marital and parental status, cultural capital, educational background, etc.) that students bring into the program (Bergman, Gross, Berry, & Shuck, 2014; Cohen & Greenberg, 2011). Two prominent models of student attrition for internal reasons are Tinto's (1975, 1987, 1993) Student Integration Model (SIM) which focuses on traditional students, and Bean and Metzner's (1985) Student Attrition Model (SAM) which focuses on nontraditional students. These models seek to explain how a student's background and motivation factor into their decision to persist in graduate studies.

Rovai (2003) drew on both Tinto's (1987) SIM and Bean and Metzner's (1985) SAM models in creation of his Composite Persistence Model (CPM) which identifies three dimensions that influence a student's attrition: (a) personal skills and characteristics (demographic, technical and social skills), (b) factors internal to the institution, and (c) external factors (financial, employment, family, life crises). For the purposes of this investigation, factors within institutional influence will be the focus as they have potential to both decrease attrition and offer opportunities for continuous program

improvement. These academic factors that impact attrition include quality of faculty-student interaction, instructional strategies, content delivery format, curriculum, mentoring and advising, orientation, and general student socialization into the institution (Cohen & Greenberg, 2011; Rice, Rojjanasrirat, & Traschel, 2013; Tinto, 1997).

In their investigation of student attrition from an online master's program, Waugh and Searle (2014) identified 11 factors that influenced a student's decision to drop out, three of which were personal and eight academic. The academic reasons for attrition included insufficient interaction or feedback from instructors, lack of support with curriculum, difficult course assignments, and unclear assignment directions. Students cited personal time management as the most challenging aspect of the program, which leads credence to Tinto's (2006) assertion that the adult graduate student often faces a dizzying array of responsibilities to balance in addition to coursework. These responsibilities often include lack of child or elder care, family problems, job demands, financial pressures, and significant life events (Bergman, Gross, Berry, & Shuck, 2014). Women, who comprise the bulk of today's teaching force (and participants enrolled in the MTE program in this investigation), are particularly susceptible to perceived stress and role conflict in the face of a graduate workload (Arric, Young, Harris, & Farrow, 2011).

In their study of adult student attrition from a bachelor's program, Bergman, et al. (2014) found that when students perceived a conflict between coursework and employment demands, their odds of persisting decreased by approximately 78%. Though programs may not be able to intervene and support the balance of family, work, community, and academics for students, they may be able to better control internal factors such as faculty interaction and support in order to help mitigate the addition of graduate studies onto already-full plates. Bergman, et al. (2014) also found that

persistence was related to the student's perception of responsive faculty and institution in general.

Factors Impacting Persistence and Retention

As Siegel (2011) argues, one way to prevent attrition may be to reframe the language used in discussing it. He suggests avoiding the use of pejorative language about "drop outs" and "attrition" and instead discussing student success, satisfaction, and learning outcomes. Thus, the next section of this review of the literature will focus on factors that promote the opposite of attrition: persistence or retention in graduate studies.

Bain, Fedynich, & Knight (2010) used a survey of personal and academic factors in order to identify which influence graduate student success. They affirmed previous research (Cohen & Greenberg, 2011; Rice, Rojjanasrirat, & Traschel, 2013; Tinto, 1997) in suggesting that a majority (91.4%) of students value the student/faculty relationship and its connection to retention in the program. Bain's (2004) earlier work elaborated on the need for professors to communicate care about students as individuals in order to foster a reciprocal relationship in which both the student and faculty feel equally invested in the student's success and growth. Qualitative data from their survey also reveal the need to focus on a student's feelings of connectedness to peers, faculty, program, and the institution itself. Though much of the literature is devoted to developing connectedness for those separated by distance due to enrollment in online programs, the authors suggest that graduate studies often produce feelings of "inherent loneliness" (p. 6) in participants, which can lead to attrition. Institutions can take specific actions designed to create community among students, their peers, and faculty, and these actions are likely to positively impact student retention and persistence.

In their study of doctoral student persistence, Litalien and Guay (2015) cite both Tinto's (1993) and Baker and Lattuca's (2010) assertions that social interactions and relationships among students and their peers, faculty and advisers "can either facilitate or hamper learning and identity development in graduate studies" (p. 220). Their study of PhD completers and noncompleters demonstrated that those who persisted in their program perceived higher levels of support for the psychological needs from faculty and peers and also felt more competent in their pursuit of a degree (which was the strongest predictor of persistence in their study). The authors speculate students leverage their relationships and feelings of support in order to overcome any "crisis in competence" that may emerge throughout their program of study.

Kolb and Kolb (2005) develop the concept of "learning space" as it relates to engaging graduate students in experiential learning. Though their study details the connection between students' learning styles and the institutional learning environment, their recommendations for creation of an effective learning space for graduate students have merit for program seeking to improve student persistence and retention. Drawing on both Dewey's (1938) and Lewin's (1957) experiential learning theory and Vygotsky's (1978) work on social cognition and situated learning theory, the authors suggest that learning occur not in one' head, but is rather situated in a community of practice. Learners are socialized into these communities through the processes of identity formation, being mentored as one moves from novice to expert, and experience in genuine activities of practice. Creation of a learning space that fosters the development of such a community requires "norms of psychological safety, serious purpose, and respect to promote learning" (Kolb and Kolb, 2005, p. 200). The authors delineate a number of principles to guide creation of learning spaces: (a) respect for learners and their

experience, (b) begin learning with the learner's experience of the subject matter, (c) creating and holding a hospitable place for learning, and making space for (d) conversational learning, (e) development of expertise, (f) acting and reflecting, (g) feeling and thinking, (h) inside-out learning, and (i) for learners for take charge of their own learning.

Drawing also on the work of Dewey, as well as literature supporting the use of this strategy to promote retention of undergraduates, Kraska (2008) explores the use of "learning communities" as a vehicle to promote graduate student retention. Her review of the literature suggests that learning communities function best when students are organized into cohort groups who can interact and share knowledge as a community of practice (Tinto, 1998). Implementation of learning communities also requires that programs commit to high levels of faculty involvement and participation in the communities and to integration of these communities into the overall mission, culture, and climate of the institution (Oertel, 2001). Though little literature exists to support this assertion, the author draws on existing theoretical work to suggest that learning communities provide critical social support that graduate students need in order to feel more satisfied with and connected to their programs of study, and thus, more likely to persist in them.

Method

Research Design

The second portion of the needs assessment study also employed an explanatory mixed-methods research design (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011; Iyankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006; McCrudden & Sparks, 2013). In the first phase, quantitative data were

collected to determine reasons for participant attrition from an MTE program. The descriptive data collected in Phase 1 were then used to identify a sample of participants for Phase 2 of this needs assessment. Follow-up in-person interviews were then conducted during Phase 2 with a subsample of White Phase 1 participants. These interviews were used to further clarify respondent's reasons for attrition as well as to identity program-related factors that contributed to their attrition. In the third phase, participants who persisted in the program were asked to identify factors that contributed to their decision to persist, as well as factors they perceived as impacting peers' decisions to drop out. Finally, data from all three phases were used to assess the connection between underlying causes in the literature (cognitive dissonance and White fragility) and participants' decisions to persist or drop out of the program.

Participants. Purposive sampling (total population sampling) was used to select participants for the initial quantitative phase of this study (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Participants in Phase 1 of this study completed at least one session of their first course in the program and dropped out at some point thereafter. In total, 133 participants were accepted into the program and began their coursework. At the time of this need assessment study, 36 participants left the program during or after one of the first four courses in the five-course sequence. The overall attrition rate across the cohorts was 27.1%. Even though Whites account for less than 50% of the total student population in the program (47%), they have a higher attrition rate from the program than do participants of color (see Table 2.4) in most cohorts.

Table 4 Comparison of persisters and drop outs for MTE Program

	Persisters	Drop outs	Total	Drop out %
Gender				
Male	16 (17%)	5 (14%)	21 (16%)	23.8%
Female	80 (83%)	31 (86%)	111 (84%)	27.9%
Ethnicity				
White	45 (46.9%)	17 (47.2%)	62 (47.1%)	27.4%
Black	18 (18.8%)	14 (38.9%)	32 (24.2%)	43.8%
Hispanic	16 (16.7%)	3 (8.3%)	19 (14.3%)	15.8%
Asian/Pacific Islander	14 (14.6%)	2 (5.6%)	16 (12.1%)	12.5%
Multiracial	3 (3.0%)	0 (0%)	3 (2.3%)	0%

Moreover, cohorts four and five had the highest overall attrition rates of any cohorts with 50.0% of White participants dropping out versus 32.0% of participants of color (Table 2.5).

Table 5 Summary of enrollments and drop outs by race

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4 & 5
Students Started First Course	White/Non 11/15	White/Non 7/9	White/Non 9/11	White/Non 22/25
Left Program	1/1	1/3	3/3	11/8
Attrition Rate	9.1% / 6.7%	14.3% / 33.3%	33.3% / 27.3%	50% / 32%

The sample of drop outs for the second and qualitative phase of this study included two White females. Both were teacher leaders in middle schools.

Measures or instrumentation. The U.S. Department of Education estimates that only 39.1% of students actually complete programs that confer graduate degrees (IPEDS, 2013). Factors impacting graduate student retention include those both personal, which are external to institutional influence (demographics, family and job responsibilities, financial concerns), and those that can be influenced internally (interaction with faculty, quality of feedback, program content and processes) (Bergman, Gross, Berry & Shuck,

2014; Cohen & Greenberg, 2011; Kraska, 2008; Rice, Rojjanasrirat, & Trachsel, 2013; Willging & Johnson, 2009). The open-ended questions in all three phases of this study probed participants' reasons for attrition as well as their peer's perceptions of their reasons for attrition, and whether they were personal or program-related. Interview questions for drop outs were designed to follow-up on their responses to the open-ended questions on the quantitative survey in Phase 1 of this study; for example, "You said the primary reason you left the program was _____. Can you say more about that?" or "Some survey respondents said that the content and assignments were too demanding. Do you agree with that?" Program completers were asked about their peers' reasons for attrition using the prompt "Many of your cohort peers chose to leave the program. What do you think impacted their decision to drop out?"

Procedure

Data collection methods: **Quantitative phase.** Participants were recruited electronically and provided informed consent before completing an online questionnaire about their reasons for attrition. Of the 36 potential respondents, 16 participated, yielding a 44% response rate. The majority of respondents were female (87 %), married or partnered (80%), have children (87%), yearly incomes of more than $100,000, and previously earned master's degrees before enrolling in this MTE program (100%). Forty percent dropped after the first course, 27% after the second course, and the other 33% after the third course in the five-course sequence. In addition to demographic data, open-ended survey questions modeled after prior research into program attrition (Bergman, Gross, Berry, & Shuck, 2014; Cohen & Greenberg, 2011; Willging & Johnson, 2009) explored why participants initially enrolled in the program, whether it met their

expectations, their reasons for dropping out, and their identification a primary reason for attrition.

Data collection methods: **Qualitative phase.** Data collection in Phase 2 served to further explore respondents' previously-given survey responses about their reasons for enrollment and attrition to answer the first and third research questions guiding this study. The interviews were semi-structured with six open-ended questions about enrollment and attrition. The researcher conducted the interviews in one-on-one sessions held at a location of the interviewee's choosing and they spanned about thirty minutes each. Respondents consented to tape-recording of the interviews and were assured confidentiality and anonymity. Participant responses were transcribed verbatim and identified using a pseudonym.

Interviews of program completers were conducted via phone at times convenient for both interviewer and interviewee. They were structured and consisted of seven open-ended questions designed to probe their experiences in the program as well as their opinions on why other participants dropped out of it. The researcher transcribed respondent answers electronically as they were given and asked probing follow-up questions as needed. A copy of the transcribed responses was then shared electronically with the respondent for the purposes of member checking (Saldana, 2015).

Data analysis. Descriptive statistics (item-specific means) were calculated for Phase 1 quantitative data. Responses to open-ended survey questions about reasons for enrollment and attrition in Phase 2 and 3 were coded for patterns and trends. For items detailing reasons for attrition, responses were subdivided into those outside of institutional influence (demographics, family and job responsibilities, financial concerns) and those within influence of the program (interaction with faculty, quality of feedback,

program content and processes) (Bergman, Gross, Berry, & Shuck, 2014; Cohen & Greenberg, 2011). Phase 2 interview data were first analyzed for reasons given for attrition using the same coding: personal factors or those within influence of the program itself. Since the interview questions had been designed to further probe reasons for attrition that can be addressed programmatically, answers relating to interaction with faculty and peers, quality and quantity of feedback, and course content and processes were further analyzed in order to identity potential future implications. Phase 3 responses were coded to examine alignment between reasons for attrition and psychological factors present in the literature (cognitive dissonance, White fragility). Responses from interviews in Phases 2 and 3 of the study were compared using versus coding (Saldana, 2015) in order to explore conflicting opinions between those who completed the program and those who did not in terms of reasons for attrition.

Findings

This exploratory mixed-methods needs assessment involved the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data designed to probe respondents' reasons for attrition from a graduate MTE program. Results of data collected about attrition are presented below in terms of alignment to the three research questions that guide this portion of the study.

Research Question 1. What reasons do program drop outs give for their attrition?

Sixty-seven percent of respondents reported that completing the entire certificate had been "important," or "very important" to them. Participants noted a variety of both personal (sick family member; Saturday religious obligations; difficulty balancing family,

work, and program-related responsibilities) and job-related factors (new position, working multiple jobs) for their attrition, as well as program-related concerns.

Research Question 2. Do reasons for attrition vary by race/ethnicity?

Former participants of color were more likely to cite personal or job-related reasons for their attrition (67% of responses) whereas 44% of reasons cited by former White participants were program related (course content and assignments, lack of support from instructors or coordinators, that the program was too demanding).

Research Question 3. Which program elements impact participant attrition?

Interviewed White drop outs expressed frustration with the quality, quantity, and timeliness of instructor feedback, as well as the general climate created in the first two courses. They stated that certain participant voices were allowed to dominate the conversation and that, as Whites, they felt attacked and made to feel "less" when studying patterns of oppression and inequity. One respondent noted her hope to voice questions about race without appearing ignorant, but that she never felt "safe" or "supported" enough to do so in class. These findings align with those of Houser, Parker, Rose, and Goodnight (2010), who noted class discussions as a key source of cognitive dissonance in participants.

The opinions of those who completed the program varied from interviewed drop outs when questioned about why certain participants decided to leave. Out of the 20 interviewed participants, 55% (n=11) named their peers' discomfort and emotional reactions to course content and processes as reasons for their attrition. Though White drop outs in particular indicated that institutional factors led them to leave, their peers did not agree. Though they did not have the language to name it, program completers cited their peers' White fragility and reactions to cognitive dissonance as reasons why they

dropped out. Several interviewees noted that drop outs appeared "uncomfortable" and "unready" to engage in discussions of race, privilege, and oppression and to do so at a "deep level". One described a drop out who found it "very hard to sit there and listen to comments from other participants; he couldn't wrap his head around them." Another remarked that it was "easy for drop outs to say they had another job or family obligation when really they just weren't prepared for this." In regards to the program's mission to equip educators with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to disrupt patterns of inequity, one interviewee noted that "People think they want to [do that] and be able to say 'I'm not racist,' but then when you get knee-deep into the seriousness of what it means, it's not just something to say, but something you have to *do*." Several interviewees specifically noted the discrepancy between beliefs and behaviors, which is the hallmark of cognitive dissonance and said that drop outs "beliefs and attitudes made things difficult for them to stay". They cited drop outs' "backgrounds, experiences, and decisions in regards to race" and the discomfort that arose from being asked to reflect on them. One went so far as to label her peers who dropped out "cowards [who were] uncomfortable and didn't want to deal with the discomfort."

Interestingly, the interviewed program completers most likely to cite White fragility or cognitive dissonance as a reason for their peers' attrition were participants of color (82%, n= 9). They recalled that many of the drop outs in their cohorts were White and that "It's the White people who weren't ready." One recalled a time when a future drop out had gotten "whiny and defensive," and said "Here we go again, telling me that it's my fault and that I am to blame for all the misfortune and injustice." She noted wishing that people had been ready to "come in and get raw and naked and ready to face their truths and accept other peoples' truths." A Black female participant unknowingly

described Helms' (1990) Reintegration phase of WRI when stating that some drop outs had been challenged by the "reading, listening, and hearing and decided 'Let me go back to being White because this is all a bit much'." The goal of Whites in Helms' (1995) third phase of WRI (Figure 1.1) is to avoid the pain of disintegration (second WRI phase) by trying to reintegrate into the former (first WRI phase) reality where awareness of racism was nonexistent or repressed (Michael, 2015).

Though it has been delimited for future study, it is interesting to note that a majority of Whites who dropped out of the fourth cohort were Jewish. Of the four Jewish participants who began the program in that cohort, only one completed it. In her interview, the lone completer reflected that the course focusing on race, ethnicity, and education in particular had "made people very uncomfortable- the subject matter and the way in which it was delivered." She noted "when the conversation shifted from their disenfranchisement to other minorities, and they [her Jewish peers] came into the narrative as oppressors or part of the oppression, they couldn't handle that." It was being "confronted with matters of race, Whiteness, and power that they were uncomfortable with" and ultimately led them to drop out, in her opinion. She reflected that she had been able to interact with a Black female instructor better than her Jewish peers because she was able to see the way the instructor treated them as much like the "way that White men have interacted with Black men for centuries in this country… she made me feel the way I imagine White people make people of color feel… and I actually think it was a good thing." Her peers labeled this instructor "unprofessional" as a way to "handle their discomfort," in her opinion. She attributed her ability to remain in the program to her experience of past oppression as an immigrant to the U.S.; she felt it gave her a better

"window" into the oppression of other groups than her peers who had only experienced religious oppression.

Discussion and Limitations

Previous efforts such as the Graduate Education Initiative (GEI) of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation sought to reduce attrition in graduate programs. The GEI had modest effects on reducing attrition (3% reduction) and increasing completion (2% increase), and it did so by reducing cohort sizes, and increasing "student quality" (recruiting those with higher GRE scores) (Groen, Jakubson, Ehrenberg, Condie, & Liu, 2008). These interventions run counter to the goals of this MTE program and its design to support the development of its participants' knowledge, skills, and dispositions for better serving the students of color populating their classrooms. As Siegel (2011) notes, some attrition is acceptable, as retention ("bodies in seats") should not be viewed as a "proxy for effective teaching and learning" (p. 17). Some of the in-service educators in the MTE program under investigation may leave to pursue their goals at another institution, or may succumb to the pressures of family, work, and community responsibilities that they face in addition to their coursework. Multicultural education in its very nature values the background and experiences that each individual student brings with him or her into the classroom (Banks, 2015; Gay, 2002; Nieto, 2008). To cease viewing participants as individuals and instead focus on their potential impact to institutional wellbeing or metrics of success would be disingenuous. All efforts must be made to avoid the mentality of "educate the best and shoot the rest" (Siegel, 2011, p. 17). Today's diverse students both need and deserve educators secure in their own racial identities and ideologies and equipped with both the skill and will needed to provide them with the

education and confidence to actualize all aspects of their myriad identities.

Retention of candidates in this MTE program, though, remains a goal of the college, educators' union, and district-level coordinators (of which the researcher is one). Of equal importance is helping White participants navigate their discomfort with program content designed to open their eyes to the sociological nature of race and racism in the educational arena. The following chapter explores how the program can capitalize on White participants' dissonance in order to not only retain them through the duration of their studies, but to also promote needed WRI development.

Chapter 3: Intervention Literature

Fifty percent of White participants in the most recent cohort enrolled in a multicultural teacher education (MTE) program for in-service educators dropped out at some point during the five-course sequence (Table 2.5). Data from a needs assessment revealed that program-related factors (as opposed to personal ones) impacted their decision to leave (course content and assignments, lack of support from instructors, the program was too demanding). Drop outs indicated that instructors failed to create a "safe" or "supportive" environment in the second and third courses (Appendix B) in the sequence. Allowing certain voices to dominate class discussions, and failure to provide opportunities to raise and discuss authentic questions about the impacts of race, privilege, and oppression were cited in follow-up interviews with drop outs (Ford, 2012). The goals of this intervention are to: (a) retain White participants in a five-course MTE program as measured by their enrollment in the third and subsequent courses, and to also, (b) promote the development of their White Racial Identity (WRI; Helms, 1990) as measured quantitatively and qualitatively. Aside from either personal or program-related factors, the decision made by White participants to drop out may also be influenced by the cognitive dissonance triggered by the program's focus on learning about and confronting racism both *within* and outside of the participants (Michael, 2015).

Theoretically, this review of the intervention literature is guided by Mezirow's (2000) theory of adult learning. Its principles are well aligned to both critical whiteness studies and Helms' (1990) concept of WRI, particularly her view of the autonomous, or final stage WRI. What follows is an overview of Mezirow's (2000) theory of transformative learning and how it can be structured in adult education. It is followed by a discussion of inter- and intra-racial group dialogue, both of which align to Mezirow's

principles and also support WRI development, especially its sociological aspects. Finally, the concept of cognitive dissonance is discussed, in terms of how adult educators can structure environments that both respect the psychological phenomena and also leverage it for WRI development in participants.

Transformative Learning for Adults

Fundamentally, Mezirow (2000) views the human condition as "a continuous effort to negotiate contested meanings" (p. 3). This negotiation involves a learning process, in which one shifts or enlarges his worldview, challenging dominant paradigms, and altering pre-existing schemas. Throughout this process, adult learners engage in transformative learning experiences designed to promote this learning. For Mezirow (2000), the overall goal of adult learning in a democratic society is to help "learners become more aware of the context of their problematic understandings and beliefs, more critically reflective on their assumptions and those of others, more fully and freely engage in discourse, and more effective in taking action on their reflective judgments" (p. 31). Mezirow's notion of transformational adult learning supports the goals of an MTE program seeking to influence the racial knowledge, skills, and dispositions of White educators. Theoretically, transformational learning aligns to critical whiteness studies in its recognition of both the *individual psychological* impact of race as well as the *sociological* dimensions of stratified *racial groups*. The next section outlines key details of Mezirow's theory of transformative learning and highlights how his theory applies to needed MTE content and experiences in a program aiming to challenge and ultimately *transform* White adults' individual- and racial group-informed conceptualization of race.

Transforming Worldviews

Mezirow's (2000) concept of transformational learning builds on both Bruner's (1996) four modes of meaning making, and Piaget's (1936) concept of schema development through assimilation and accommodation of new knowledge. Deeming Bruner's list incomplete, Mezirow suggests a fifth way that adults make meaning of new information: "becoming critically aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation" (p. 4) In order to become more critically aware, adults construct new or revised interpretations of what is known to them in the historical, biographical, and cultural contexts in which they are embedded. Making meaning for Mezirow (2000), involves renegotiation of one's previously held values, feelings, and meanings that have been "uncritically assimilated from others" (p. 8). This renegotiation positions the individual to gain "greater control over our lives as socially responsible, clear-thinking decision makers. As such, it has particular relevance for learning in contemporary societies that share democratic values" (p. 8).

For the White educator teaching in a decidedly racial U.S. society, Mezirow's notion of learning as a means for individual perfection of his capabilities for social justice and democracy rings true. Though many White educators champion educational equity, some have not fully actualized autonomous (Helms, 1990) and anti-racist identities. Mezirow's identification of learning as a process designed to challenge accepted identities and unquestioned worldviews resonates for those seeking to further problematize the role of race in education. Many White educators cling to values and worldviews that provide them a "sense of stability, coherence, community, and identity" (p. 8). The goal of transformative learning is to provide adults with learning experiences

designed to shift one's worldview through examination of views different from their own. This process of shifting worldviews is *transformative* according to Mezirow (2000), and results in an adult with "a more dependable frame of reference that is more inclusive, differentiating, permeable (open to other viewpoints), critically reflective of assumptions, emotionally capable of change, and integrative of experience" (p. 19). For White educators tasked with teaching an increasingly diverse set of students, the ability to consider, accommodate, and assimilate racial and cultural knowledge other than their own is critical. Critical MTE (Gorski, 2009) necessarily challenges dominant White worldviews through content and pedagogy designed to transform the individual White educator.

Under the umbrella of *worldview*, Mezirow (2000) posits that individuals subscribe to various frames of reference that are impacted by both their individual and group-identified historical and biographical context. These unquestioned and taken-for-granted frames of reference face challenge from differing points of view. This process of re-examining one's existing and culturally linked schemas for viewing the world is often painful, though potentially transformative. Mezirow describes the process of transformation as a "movement through time of reformulating reified structures of meaning by reconstructing dominant narratives" (19). Transformative learning occurs in one of four ways according to Mezirow (2000): (a) elaboration on previous worldviews or frames of reference, (b) learning of new frames of reference, (c) through transformation of one's point of view, or (d) through transformation of one's habits of mind.

For a White educator who subscribes to and identifies with the dominant culture, transformative learning necessarily calls into question both individual and group identities and linked beliefs:

> Transformative learning refers to transforming a problematic frame of reference to make it more dependable in our adult life by generating opinions and interpretations that are more justified. We become critically reflective of those beliefs that become problematic. Beliefs are often inferential, based on repetitive emotional interactions and established outside of our awareness. Frames of reference may be highly individualistic or shared as paradigms (Mezirow, 2000, p. 20).

Transformational learning helps an individual to problematize her closely held worldviews, frames of reference, points of view, and mindsets in order to shift her sense-making perspective. This shift is non-reversible, as an individual rejects prior fixed, narrow, or static ways of viewing the world and becomes more open, flexible and reflective when confronted with new or different perspectives.

Transformative Learning: Vehicle for WRI Development

A common critique of Helms' (1990) model of WRI is its dichotomous nature; a White individual's racial identity is ascertained by assessing his feeling towards Blacks. Helms (1984) herself acknowledges that much of White identity theory has been built upon studying White attitudes toward racial outgroups. Problematically, White bias against racial outgroups is expressed through prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviors. Developing one's WRI involves increasing one's sense of racial consciousness, according to Helms (1984), and through problematizing prior conceptions of race and racism. As an individual progresses through Helms' six WRI statuses, he is

able to conceive of racism as a *system* of power and privilege that is structured into societal institutions and serves to benefit one racial group at the expense of others.

Accepting new conceptualizations of race and racism is key to WRI development, and also factors prominently in Mezirow's (2000) notion of transformational learning:

> There are obvious inequities in the social structure reflecting asymmetrical power relationships and perpetuating inequalities that profoundly influence the way one understands experience. Learners need to become critically reflective of how these factors have shaped the ways they think and their beliefs so they may take collective action to ameliorate them (28).

Mezirow (2000) describes transformational learning as an individual's means of liberating himself from outdated and non-dependable ways of thinking, a concept that maps onto Helms' process of WRI development. Both models acknowledge identity as multi-faceted and influenced by group affiliation, history, language, and culture. Both view the individual and his identity as governed by social relationships subject to prevailing cultural paradigms. The two theories intersect in their view of a learner liberated through transformative learning; both models culminate in production of an *autonomous* individual able to critically reflect on a variety of worldviews in pursuit of democracy and justice.

Helms' (1984) describes the autonomous White individual as one who views racial difference not as deficit, but as learning opportunity. An individual with an autonomous WRI seeks opportunities to build cross-racial alliances in pursuit of social justice, and does so with a "mixture of appreciation and respect" (p. 156). She is secure in her own racial identity, acknowledging both cultural diversity and racial stratification, using this knowledge to work across racial difference for the betterment society.

Mezirow's (2000) conception of the autonomous individual aligns; this person is able to ask the hard questions, "Who is granted the opportunity to achieve autonomous thinking? Who is excluded, cast as the other to be excluded and, by implication, dominated? (p. 28-29). Both theorists champion individuals who understand the sociological aspects of racism and dominance; both believe that autonomous thinking is not a goal to be reached, but rather a continual renegotiation of new and competing information. The autonomous individual commits to constant reexamination of his assumptions and the feelings, values, and beliefs they color, seeking critical analysis and validation through examination and dialogue with others (Mezirow, 2000). Those who perceive racialized information using an autonomous WRI lens have been emancipated from the "search for certainty and control through totalizing explanations and the elimination of difference" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 29). Instead, they have internalized a "positive socioracial-group commitment, use internal standards for self-definition, [and have the] capacity to relinquish the privileges of racism" (Helms, 1994, p. 185).

With the goal of producing educators who are more "liberated, socially responsible, and autonomous" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 30) designers and facilitators of adult MTE can seek to create learning environments cognizant of but not subject to prevailing notions of power and privilege. Transformative learning designed to promote autonomy "involves blocking out power relationships engendered in the structure of communication, including those traditionally existing between teachers and learners (Mezirow, 2000, p. 31). In order to do so, MTE educators can utilize content that unearths the institutional and structural nature of racism, and also pedagogies that center multiple perspectives and voices. The next section details the use of structured interracial

group dialogue as an example of transformative learning as well as a stimulant of WRI development.

Inter and Intra-Racial Group Dialogue: Content and Pedagogy

Mixed-race cohorts of in-service educators progress together throughout this MTE program, meaning that all within-class dialogue, be it paired, small group, or whole class, is necessarily interracial, or "intergroup". These groupings are ripe for what Mezirow (2000) deems "constructive discourse," (p. 7) a process in which individuals leverage the shared experience of others to renegotiate their pre-existing schema, including deeply-held values and beliefs. In the context of transformation theory, dialogue is a means to seek common understanding and revised worldviews (Mezirow, 2000). An individual engaging in dialogue about race weighs his past beliefs against new evidence, arguments, and alternative perspectives. Dialogue can lead to "a clearer understanding by tapping collective experience to arrive at a tentative best judgment" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 11). Facilitated inter- and intra-racial dialogue in the context of MTE can support the problematization of Whiteness; how it manifests across culture, ideology, beliefs, and socioeconomic structures in a way that inspires conformity and undermines work toward collective social justice (Mezirow, 2000).

Zúñiga, Nagda, Chesler, and Cytron (2007) define intergroup dialogue as "a facilitated, face-to-face encounter that aims to cultivate meaningful engagement between members of two or more social identity groups that have a history of conflict" (p. 2). Unpacking this history of interracial group conflict involves intentional and sustained interaction designed to explore the ways in which systems of both privilege and oppression have affected inter-group relations (Nagda & Zúñiga, 2003). Specifically,

interracial dialogue unfolds over several face-to-face sessions in which participants wrestle with their racial identities and how they are impacted by power, privilege and oppression. They grapple with their impacted identities while developing their skills to talk across difference and finding ways to promote equity and social justice across groups (Zúñiga, Nagda, & Sevig, 2002). Providing a space for interracial dialogue, though, does not guarantee meaningful engagement; these groups must be carefully structured around key content and processes in order to facilitate increased understanding of race and how it is structured in the U.S. educational system. The following sections will present the somewhat limited empirical support for interracial dialogue and then discuss content and processes needed in order to make this dialogue effective.

Content for Interracial Group Dialogue

Structuring productive interracial group dialogue in a diverse MTE classroom involves a "struggle to find the right combination of classroom activities, materials, and conditions that will result in constructive learning of antiracism concepts and practice" (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2014, p. 200). If the goal is for educators to actively interrupt policies and practices that reproduce unjust and racist outcomes in schools, course content must help them to: (a) move from an understanding of racism as individual to one that recognizes its systemic roots, (b) acknowledge White dominance and how it is structured, and (c) situate their work and identities as intersectional and not governed solely through the constructs of race and ethnicity.

Sensoy and DiAngelo (2014) employ the metaphor of a novice versus a skilled basketball player in order to illustrate the difference between viewing racism as individual versus systemic. A novice basketball player, they note, must focus attention on her own assigned role. The skilled player is able to see beyond her role and consider the

moves of other players. She is able to base her own strategy on knowledge of multiple and shifting factors at play in a game and a big picture of the how other players will assist or block her path toward the basket. Engaging in anti-racist work requires White educators to function like a skilled player who understands the historical and sociopolitical dimensions of race and how they impact power and privilege. Not only are Whites socialized not to see race (McIntosh, 2007), but they also tend to view themselves and others as sovereign individuals, not as part of a complex and interwoven racialized system (Sensoy and DiAngelo, 2014). Engaging an interracial group to define how race and racism operate in the U.S. can be as complex an endeavor as designing a foolproof basketball play; the individuals bring with them unique and differing experiences with and opinions on racism. For example, some may idealize colorblindness, while others see racism only as individual acts of prejudice and discrimination, and others still bring knowledge of how colonization and slavery created a race-based system of oppression. All of these players in an intergroup dialogue could benefit from the development of a common language and way of understanding structural racism and other forms of systemic inequities (Blitz and Kohl, Jr., 2010, p. 484).

The work of White participants in an interracial group dialogue involves identifying their status as members of the dominant racial group. Kendall (2012) argues that if Whites do not understand how they collectively and as individuals maintain White supremacy, their "relationship with people of color remains superficial, [their] ability to function in diverse workplaces is greatly diminished, and [they] fail to create a just world in which everyone has an equitable opportunity to contribute and thrive" (p. 14). Sensoy and DiAngelo (2014) suggest the use of vignettes in which White participants are forced to contend with the idea that the notion of "normal" is defined in relation to the dominant

culture through its prioritization of norms, customs, policies, and procedures designed to reinforce White superiority and marginalized minoritized groups. Brosnan (2009) advocates the structuring of interracial dialogue about dominance around films such as Lee Mun Wah's 1994 "The Color of Fear," in which an interracial group of eight men discuss the impact that race, oppression, and privilege have had on their lives. Films and vignettes both provide opportunities for the White racial "novice" to listen and learn about White dominance from the lived experiences of others. Through activities like these, they are challenged to examine the impact of their socialization into dominant cultural patterns (Blitz & Kohl, 2010) and how these patterns impact their practice as educators.

Though engaging White educators in interracial group dialogue about the impact of race on education necessitates a focus on race itself, it remains important to situate the conversation in acknowledgement of the constellation of multiple and intersectional identities that all educators bring to their work. Blitz and Kohl (2010) note that acknowledging intersectional identities (e.g. race, class, gender, sexuality, religion) is often feared as detracting from the important conversation around race and privilege, "validating the unique identities and experiences of individuals [is] an important component of building trust" (p. 492), though. Creating a space in which the intersections of gender, sexuality, religion, class, and other aspects of identity are included actually has the potential to enhance White participant understanding of race and racism. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2014) argue that all participants, regardless of identity, enter the dialogue attached to the dominant ideology and that this attachment is difficult to dislodge. Study of participants' multiple and intersectional identities can unearth how social hierarchies contribute to experiences of dominance, oppression and privilege (Blitz & Kohl, 2010).

Discussion of identity from an intersectional perspective helps participants to engage in "critical self-reflection of their own socialization into structured relations of oppression and privilege… [to] help identify our placement in a matrix of unequally valued social groups and the messages received through those placements" (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014, p. 2-3).

When selecting interracial group dialogue content to help participants recognize the systemic nature of racism, White dominance, and the how their multiple identities dictate their position in the system, Sensoy and DiAngelo (2014) provide some useful guidelines: (a) focus on structures and patterns instead of individuals and their actions, (b) promote complexity; the more complexity is seen, the more complex responses to it become, and (c) recognize that as social beings, participants always work in dynamic and contextual relation amongst one another.

Pedagogical Guidelines for Interracial Group Dialogue

Nagda et al. (2009) contend that two powerful processes mediate interracial group dialogue: "communication processes which "occur between individuals" and psychological processes which "occur within individuals" (p. 4). The content for interracial group dialogue alone is likely to trigger cognitive dissonance, a psychological phenomenon, in White participants. Galman (2009) argues that differences between the lived individual biographies of White educators and their experiences as members of diverse educational institutions result in conflicted and opposing thoughts, or dissonance. When faced with dissonance, educators may choose to either retreat from the conversation through use of silence, or engage anger or defensiveness to manage their internal discord. Houser, Parker, Rose, and Goodnight (2010) argue that cognitive dissonance can be navigated in a way that promotes educator growth, though a careful

balance between disequilibrium and safety must be continually negotiated. Part of working through this dissonance within the venue of an interracial group is to allow unequal airtime for participants of color, and provide structures that discourage fragility and withdrawal.

Fostering discourse designed to promote transformation involves establishing a set of norms that support a dialogue free from the distortions and coercions of power and privilege (Mezirow, 2000). A common ground rule or guideline for interracial group dialogue involves speaking one's truth, which leads to the conclusion that all voices are to be given equal weight. According to DiAngelo and Sensoy (2014) there is a danger in this premise. They argue that "when—in service to 'fairness'—instructors give equal time to dominant narratives (or are criticized for not doing so) we legitimize the idea that the conversation is equalizing only when it also includes dominant perspectives" (p. 197). MTE and the goal of producing anti-racist educators demands that marginalized perspectives be prioritized so as to unearth the systems of structural oppression at play in the educational institution. Demands to give voice to the other side during interracial group dialogue ignore the reality that it is presented daily and normalized through mainstream culture, media, and schooling. The only way to shift this balance of power is to deny equal airtime, the authors assert, in a deliberate attempt to "turn down the volume" (p. 197) on the dominant narrative and instead focus on the voices of the marginalized (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2014).

When interracial groups come together, the White dominant group members will often speak first and dictate the agenda for the conversation (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014). Whites do not come to these conversations without socialized ideologies that blind them to racism except in explicit extreme or cases. Allowing these ideologies to dominate

interracial group conversation leave them unproductive not only for participants of color, but also for the White participants themselves since nothing about the mainstream narrative will support their intellectual growth or prepare them to take antiracist action (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2014). Instead, facilitators can work to unpack these dominant narratives by providing space for alternative claims and narratives to surface. The experiences of participants of color with oppression and racism are not typically prioritized in the classroom, though they provide a compelling counter story to the dominant experience of education in the U.S. Elevating these perspectives can trigger paradigm shifts in White participants and facilitators must "anticipate and be responsive to the inevitable disruption of traditional power relations and shifting paradigms that will occur" (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014). Allowing for multiple diverse perspectives helps educators to become more "critically reflective of our assumptions or those of others [in order to] arrive at a transformative insight," (Mezirow, 2000, p. 20), assumptions that can be further reified through discourse.

This shift in narrative from the racially dominant to the racially oppressed is likely to trigger an emotional reaction in White participants. This emotional fragility may manifest itself in silence or a shift away from emotional, self-reflective engagement with the discussion to a more intellectual one. Even when used as an emotional defense to the cognitive disequilibrium provoked through discussions of race, White silence is often perceived as hostility by participants of color (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014). When not addressed, White fragility often leads all participants to question whether the interracial group is indeed a safe space. The notion of a *safe space*, though, is built on the fallacy that what feels *safe* is agreed upon by both Whites and participants of color. White participants often perceive dialogue about race to be dangerous and stressful without any

acknowledgement that being seen as the racial "other" involves actual danger and stress to those of color (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014). Attempts to structure interracial group dialogue so as to prevent and manage White stress trivializes the historical and personal stress felt by participants of color due to a legacy of slavery, lynching, interment, genocide, segregation (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014).

How can facilitators of interracial group dialogue help White participants to "get beyond our fear, our sweaty palms, our anxiety about saying the wrong things or using the wrong words, and have an honest conversation about racial issues?" (Tatum, 2003, p. xxiii). Hindering honest and effective interracial group dialogue are notions of political correctness, fear of conflict, and lack of experience with productive dialogue (Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000; Ford, 2012). In order to promote "intellectual and emotional humility and practice critical engagement," DiAngelo & Sensoy (2014, p. 195) offer what they call *silence breakers*. Silence breakers, they assert, promote critical analysis and humility rather than rejection and rebuttal of marginalized voices. They are designed to open, rather than close, connection by allowing Whites to acknowledge their fears of making mistakes and losing face by instead adopting "a stance of curiosity and humility" (p. 195) about race. Question starters encourage White participants to revise claims about race into authentic questions by providing them with "some language with which to lean into rather than away from difficult content and engagement" (p. 195). An example silence breaker is "Can you help me understand whether what I'm thinking right now might be problematic?" (p. 195). These and other structures for interracial dialogue help to make the discourse more transformative in nature; it helps to reframe the needlessly adversarial nature of discussion about race relations into an opportunity to develop collaborative understanding and social competence (Mezirow, 2000).

White Intra-Racial Affinity Groups Promote WRI and Anti-Racism

In the context of an MTE program that is struggling to retain White participants through its duration, racial affinity groups may provide a place for Whites to "reflect on what being White means to them" (Denevi, 2004). Given that a goal of the program is to equip White participants with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to dismantle policies and practices that negatively impact the achievement of students of color, White participants need to first identify their role in maintaining these gaps. Affinity groups provide a safe space for Whites to develop an anti-racist White racial identity (WRI) through discussions of Whiteness, White privilege, internalized dominance, and the attendant feelings of shame, guilt, and defensiveness that often emerge as White moves through the phases of White racial identity development (WRID) (Obear & Martinez, 2013).

Low-level WRI: Struggling with internalized dominance. Carter (1997) contends that levels of WRI are "composed of attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors toward both self as a member of the White racial group and members of the nondominant racial groups (i.e. people of color)" (p. 199). Helms and Piper (1994) describe the process of WRI development (WRID) as one of maturation triggered by a "combination of life experiences, especially intrapsychic dissonance and race-related environmental pressures, as well as cognitive readiness" (p. 126-128). For White MTE program participants with lower-level WRI, interracial course dialogue may be the first time they have openly discussed and acknowledged the impact that Whiteness has had on their experiences. As Sue (2010) notes, Whites are susceptible to internalized dominance in which they believe and act out the constant messages they receive that their racial group is superior to others and entitled to power and position. Dialogue with the racial other during class meetings

can help Whites to identify the significance of belonging to a particular racial group (Tatum, 2003) and how both Whiteness and racism have shaped much of U.S. history and culture including the institution of education (Brosnan, 2009). Interracial group dialogue serves as a "race-related environmental pressure" and triggers reflection for White educators who likely grew up in predominantly White communities and attended majority White schools yet fail to see that their experiences often differ dramatically from those of their students and colleagues of color.

By pairing intra-racial affinity group dialogue with interracial whole class discussion, facilitators provide White participants with opportunities to work through misconceptions about race within the interracial group and to develop higher-level anti-racist WRI in their intra-racial affinity group. Ford (2012) notes the potential of interracial dialogue to dismantle "traditionalist white ideological scripts [that] signify white students' shared storylines of typical hegemonic narratives that elaborate understandings (or misunderstandings) of whiteness, white racial identity, and white racism" (p. 139). Intra-group dialogues, on the other hand, have the potential to help White participants to develop "counterhegemonic narratives of resistance, alliances, and antiracism work that [they] embrace as they progress in their understandings of white racial identify development" (Ford, 2012, p. 139) in the group. Though the interracial dialogue serves to disrupt White narratives birthed from their privileged positions within society, it is within the intra-racial affinity group in which White participants can identify and analyze their own white racial identities and the impact they have on their understanding of race, racism, and its impact on education and society as a whole.

White participants in an MTE program could benefit from a chance to define their own racial identities before attempting to understand others'. Though participants do not

share the same lived experiences, they share the same path in terms of WRID and how their racial identity has impacted their journey in life (Denevi, 2004). The third of Helms and Carter's (1990) six statuses of WRI, and the last of the racist Phase of WRI is reintegration, when the White person's increasing discomfort with new awareness of privilege and racial oppression resolves the tension by claiming not to notice behaviors that contradict their previously-held beliefs. Though few students in the MTE program in question endorsed statements indicative of a reintegration WRI, they tend to drop out of the program after the course that pushes their WRID the most: Race and Ethnicity in American Education.

Higher-level WRI: The transition from racist to non-racist to anti-racist. In order to develop an autonomous WRI (the final and highest level of WRI), individuals must navigate first the fourth, or Pseudo-Independent level, and the fifth level of WRI called Immersion-Emersion. The hallmark of the Pseudo-Independent phase is a White person's inability to "let go of his or her own unique experience as the primary mechanism for understanding other racial groups" (Carter, 1997, p. 205). Interracial dialogue often supports individuals in this stage as they look to victims of racism and oppression for answers about how to stop it. Within Pseudo-Independence, Whites avoid self-examination and acknowledgement of their own roles in maintaining systems of racial oppression, and instead turn to people of color for simplistic solutions (Carter, 1997). Whites in this phase would likely resist intra-racial dialogue as they have begun to reject White racist ideologies but remain emotionally distant from the work of true anti-racism and reliant on people of color for guidance (Carter, 1997). Mezirow (2000) notes that effective participation in discourse requires a degree of emotional intelligence, (Goleman, 1998) or maturity: awareness of and ability to manage one's own emotions as

well as those of others. Pseudo-Independent Whites may lack the ability to regulate their own emotions when confronted with the realities of their participation is a system of racial power and privilege.

Michael (2015) likens the fifth phase of WRID, Immersion-Emersion, to "a period of racial adolescence" (p. 51). In this phase, Whites "'immerse' themselves in learning about race and Whiteness while 'emerging' into an entirely new identity" (Michael, 2015, p. 48). As with adolescence, this period of identity development is fraught with self-doubt and desperation to project an image as a White person who "gets it" when it comes to race. This self-doubt often leads to paranoia about missteps in the fight against racism, as individuals in this phase feel a newfound accountability to persons of color in their struggle against oppression (Michael, 2015). Intra-racial groups can aid Whites in this phase as they provide a place to dialogue with like-minded Whites, to continue the process of trading in myths and misconceptions about race and racism with accurate information (Carter, 1997). Working with other White allies in intra-racial groups can also help Whites in this phase to realize that "racism is a White problem in that its development and perpetuation rests with White people" (Katz, 1999, p. 5). Whites in this phase can ally with other Whites to examine their WRID and "related motivation before allying or engaging in cross-racial social justice work" (Ford, 2012, p. 153). They can work together to find agreement, consider alternative viewpoints, reframe their thinking, and tolerate any anxiety that arises from shifting their closely held perceptions (Mezirow, 2000).

Carter (1997) defines Autonomy as a status "in which the person has freed self from racism and White racial denial… [and] has, through a process of self and group discovery, learned to value one's self in a noncomparative and nonoppressive way" (p.

205). White educators in this phase have worked through both racist and non-racist phases of WRI, and are now able to function effectively as anti-racist allies to students and colleagues of color because they have made "the conscious decision to abandon racism" (Helms, 2008, p. 16). Autonomous individuals have "come to understand whiteness as complicated, nuanced, cultural, ideological, and material construct" (Ford, 2012, p. 139) and are able to do so without reliance on input from the racial other. Autonomous Whites rely on other anti-racist White allies to identify ways in which their institutions perpetuate interpersonal, institutional, and structural racism, and how they can work to dismantle these oppressive systems (Brosnan, 2009). The fight against racism has become personal for Autonomous Whites, as they now have a "complex and differentiated understanding of Whiteness and racism" (Carter, 1997, p. 206) and know that "oppression of any group ultimately oppresses all members of that society" (Blitz & Kohl, 2010, p. 493). Blitz and Kohl (2010) found an important outgrowth of intra-racial affinity group work related to White autonomy:

> White antiracist caucus members began to recognize the costs of privilege: understanding privilege as bait that lures one into supporting the oppression of others. As this perspective became integrated, antiracism work was no longer only about helping others; racism became personally offensive and members found that they worked for equity for themselves and others. Eventually, caucus members became increasingly adept at holding themselves and each other accountable, in addition to maintaining accountability to people of color. (p. 493).

Participation in intra-racial affinity groups not only promotes the development of anti-racist WRI, but also facilitates the development of better White allies for both educators and students or color. Brosnan (2009) notes that intra-racial affinity group

work allows participants to be more effective allies to their peers of color due to their increased commitment to an honest and on-going analysis of race and its impact on the educational community. Michael (2015) describes seeing her students through the lens of her Autonomous WRI and being able to finally see them in "all of their wholeness- along with an understanding of the racial subtext that shapes their lives- [with] my view of them less clouded by my own guilt, insecurities, and ignorance" (p. 49). Her newfound Autonomy allowed Michael (2015) to make better decisions about appropriate curriculum and pedagogy for her diverse students without having to rely on guidance or affirmation from peers of color. Participation in both inter- and intra-racial dialogue has the potential to help White educators to develop their own racial identities to a point where they can humbly work with both colleagues of color and other Whites in order to dismantle policies and practices that produce unjust outcomes for students of color.

Dialogue about race, especially interracial, has the potential to spark cognitive dissonance in White individuals, especially those with less advanced WRI. The next section discusses the notion of dissonance as a learning opportunity to be harnessed in MTE as a means to help White educators develop more stable and nuanced WRI statuses.

Cognitive Dissonance

Dissonance as Opportunity

Piaget's (1977) theory of cognitive disequilibrium provides a theoretical foundation for Festinger's (1957) conceptualization of cognitive dissonance as well as a window into how disequilibrium or dissonance can be harnessed as a learning opportunity. Piaget (1977) viewed conflicting cognitions as a means to stimulate the cognitive processes of accommodation and assimilation, both of which are critical to

knowledge development. When learners are presented with new knowledge, they must accommodate, or assimilate this new information into the pre-existing mental schema, processes which demand mental effort (Adcock, 2012). Both Piaget and Festinger viewed cognitive conflict as a means to promote intellectual development through cognitive adaptation (Waxer & Morton, 2012). Learning itself for Piaget (1929) is the process of integrating new information with previous knowledge. This new or unfamiliar knowledge necessarily triggers a state of dissonance (Festinger, 1957) or disequilibrium (Piaget, 1977), which the learner is motivated to resolve. Therefore, MTE educators seeking to promote WRI development in participants can leverage race-related dissonance as opportunities to cognitively promote participants' development of new and more nuanced views about race.

Piaget's (1977) vision of cognitive development maps onto Helms' (1990) theory of WRI development; both view learning as "the attainment of successively higher states of equilibrium or balance" (Waxer & Morton, 2012, p. 586). Piaget (1977) speculated that disequilibrium motivates the individual to resolve his cognitive conflict in order to attain a new state of equilibrium (Waxer & Morton, 2012), whereas Helms (1990) suggests that WRI develops as individuals attain progressively more complex ways of understanding racialized information. Both theories are compatible with the notion of dissonance as learning opportunity. Designers of MTE can strategically create situations in which "learners can satisfy their internal need to resolve dissonant information, thereby increasing their deep processing of the content (Adcock, 2012, p. 589). Since dissonance can occur regardless of the learner's level of knowledge (Adcock, 2012), MTE facilitators can attempt to trigger dissonance before critical new learning, creating in the learner a drive-like state (Hull, 1952) in which equilibrium is sought.

Aronson's (1960) theory of dissonance aligns to Mezirow's (2000) theory of transformative learning for adults: both theorists view learning as sense-making, or a process in which learners seek to make sense of their environments and behaviors in order to lead what they deem meaningful lives. The White educator enrolled in an MTE program often seeks to make sense of the racialized state of education in the U.S. This desire to make sense and meaning is an ideal opportunity for both dissonance and learning according to Aronson (1960) who speculated that dissonance is triggered most strongly when "an important element of self-concept is threatened… typically when a person performs a behavior that is inconsistent with his or her sense of self" (Aronson cited in Cooper, p. 110). The process of WRI development naturally evokes dissonance related to one's identity or sense of self because the process necessitates that the White individual (a) abandon colorblind notions of race, (b) accept himself as actor in a racist system, and finally (c) transform into a non-, or preferably, anti-racist ally to people of color in a shared quest for social justice. This redefinition of self and one's schemata about race demands continual processing of race-related dissonance in order to reach successively higher and more nuanced phases of WRI. Both MTE facilitators and participants can embrace dissonance and seek to not to minimize or reduce it, but to instead manage it as a critical component of WRI development.

Mediating Cognitive Dissonance

Both drop outs themselves and their peers who persisted in this MTE program noted a connection between participant cognitive dissonance and their decision to drop out. Several studies (Gorski, 2009; Houser, et al., 2010; McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2009; Ross, 2013) indicate the importance of providing supplemental instruction on the concept of cognitive dissonance in order to prepare students to more effectively engage with

transformative course content. Gorski (2009) advocates that instructors harness the "golden opportunities for learning" (p. 54) provided by moments of cognitive dissonance. In order to do this, he recommends not only teaching students about dissonance theory up-front, but to preface course activities designed to promote dissonance explicitly ("*This might ignite cognitive dissonance for you…*"). When students experience dissonance while engaged in discourse about racism, he encourages them to write about their discomfort rather than sidetracking the class through verbal expression of it. Gorski (2009) also deliberately provokes dissonance through use of a "Who Said It?" quiz designed to dispel student myths about U.S. historical figures and their faulty personas (e.g. Franklin and Jefferson as faithful Christians, Lincoln as anti-racist). Ultimately, Gorski (2009) conceptualizes the role of MTE instructor as to help students to "recognize the ways in which we protect ourselves psychologically from understanding the complexity of the world around us… [and instead] allow new and conflicting information to enter their consciousness" (p. 55).

McFalls and Cobb-Roberts (2009) embed not only supplemental instruction on dissonance into their courses, but also explicit dissonance reduction strategies. Their goal was to create awareness of dissonance (metadissonance) and then to have students reflect on specific texts, ideas, or class discussion that sparked it for them. In their study of 41 undergraduate theology students, Scheid and Vasko (2014) found that tending to students' emotional reactions to content about power and privilege (as often expressed through dissonance and fragility) is important so that it does not become an obstacle to transformational learning. The authors note that White students in particular are apt to distance themselves from disparate cognitions about racial inequity through silence, over-emphasis on the individual rather than institutional nature of racism, and failure to

consider their own complicity in systems of racial injustice. They recommend use of learning covenants or agreements, instructor monologues, and facilitated discussion in order to help participants navigate dissonance. Ross (2013) utilized free-writing activities and whole class and small-group analysis of participants' anonymous reflections and discussion posts in order to help 28 undergraduate gender studies' students navigate their dissonance. The literature points to the importance of teaching students about cognitive disequilibrium or dissonance and then providing explicit ways to help them work through it over the course of the semester.

The goal of this MTE program is to *transform* participants' attitudes about race in order to help them better serve students who differ from them racially and culturally. An intervention designed to retain them and develop their WRIs must account for the fact that transformative learning, especially about race, "is often an intensely threatening emotional experience in which we have to become aware of both the assumptions undergirding our ideas and those supporting our emotional responses to the need to change" (Mezirow, 2002, p. 6-7). The next chapter outlines a procedure designed to unearth and measure participant dissonance, as well as the WRI development that triggers it.

Chapter 4: Research Purpose and Design

This mixed methods study measured the ability of a graduate-level MTE program to (a) develop White participants' non-racist, Phase II WRIs as well as to (b) retain them through the duration of their coursework despite cognitive dissonance triggered by the subject matter. Previous investigations of White educators' WRI have employed a pre-post course administration of the White Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (WRIAS; Helms & Carter, 1990) to quantitatively measure change in participants' WRI as a result of course content and pedagogy (Brown, Parham, & Yonker, 1996; Neville, Heppner, Louie, & Thompson, 1996; Ottavi, Pope-Davis, & Dings, 1994; Taylor, 1994). Other studies have captured change in participants' WRI using qualitative methods, including coding and analysis of participants' written course products (journals, self-reflections), field observations, and case studies (Bloom, Peters, Margolin, & Fragnoli, 2015; Case, 2012; Goren & Plaut, 2012; Han, West-Olatunji, & Thomas, 2011; Horton & Scott, 2004; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997, 1999; Simons, Fehr, Black, Hogerwerff, Georganas, & Russell, 2011; Sleeter, 1992b; Tatum, 1992). This mixed-methods study investigated the impact of whiteness in terms of the racial identities and cognitive dissonance that White participants navigate while enrolled in an MTE program. A convergent parallel mixed methods design was used, in which the quantitative and qualitative data were collected in parallel, analyzed separately, and then merged. In this study, quantitative data was used to test a theory that MTE programs impact the development of participants' WRI over time. Qualitative data in the form of participant written journals explored the central phenomena of WRI and how it is impacted by participant experience of cognitive dissonance. WRI is a complex and difficult-to-measure psychological phenomenon; both

quantitative and qualitative data were collected in order to triangulate the data, offsetting any weakness in either and resulting in a more complete (Bryman, 2006) data set.

The purpose of this investigation was to both measure change in participants' WRI development as well as to better understand the impact of cognitive dissonance on this complicated phenomenon. A change in participants' WRI was measured using quantitative data on a pre-post course racial identity assessment, the results of which were interpreted using findings from participants' qualitative written journals. The investigation also sought a more nuanced understanding of the complex phenomena (Newman, Ridenour, Newman, & DeMarco, Jr., 2003) of WRI and how it manifests in terms of the attitudes, behaviors, and values of White educators who voluntarily enrolled in a race-focused MTE program. A pragmatic worldview guided this study in its focus on multiple methods of data collection to better understand WRI and its aim to impact the practice of both MTE facilitators and participants (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011).

The design of this study relied heavily on the tradition of *grounded theory research* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and involved the collection and analysis of multiple data sources in order to develop a theory about the interaction between cognitive dissonance and WRI development. The research questions that guided this study are:

RQ1. What relationship exists between cognitive dissonance and White participants' experience in the program?

RQ2. How does cognitive dissonance impact participants' persistence in an MTE course and program?

RQ3. How does knowledge of and reflection on cognitive dissonance impact participants' WRI?

Outcome Evaluation

In this study, quantitative pre-post course WRIAS data was used to test the theory that explicit instruction and reflection on cognitive dissonance would positively influence participants' WRI development as well as retain them in their coursework. Qualitative data was collected via participants' written assignments and reflective exercises designed to probe their levels of cognitive dissonance throughout. These data were coded in order to identify emergent themes from the qualitative data and grouped according to the concepts represented by the codes in order to further develop and refine a theory about the relationship between cognitive dissonance and WRI (Saldana, 2015). Collection of both quantitative and qualitative data (a) offset any weaknesses in the individual data sets, (b) provided a more complete understanding of the phenomena of WRI and race-related cognitive dissonance (Bryman, 2006), and (c) brought greater insight into the problem than would be obtained by either type of data separately (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

The intervention included: (1) explicit instruction on the concept of cognitive dissonance, the three ways in which it is resolved, and how it manifests within the context of an MTE course; and (2) structured opportunities to reflect on cognitive dissonance, which course content or processes triggered it, and how the participant chose to resolve it. The intervention's proximal outcomes included (a) increasing participants' abilities to navigate the cognitive dissonance that arise from the study and discussion of race and racism and (b) retaining White participants in the program. It was hypothesized that participants' ability to successfully mediate their cognitive dissonance about race will enable them to progress into higher phases of WRI; the better able they are to handle

the cognitive dissonance sparked by racial course content, the more likely it is that they will respond to this racial information from an advanced WRI status.

Long-term outcomes included equipping participants with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed in order to disrupt institutional and structural racism in their work settings, and to develop an autonomous-stage WRI, which indicates an ability to process racialized information in a non-or anti-racist manner (Appendix A).

The decision to use the WRIAS to measure the outcome WRI variable was made with recognition of the inherent difficulty in capturing data on the multidimensional psychological WRI variable (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004) using a single ready-made measurement instrument (WRIAS). A potential threat to internal validity in use of the WRIAS is a lack of internal consistency within WRIAS subscales (Behrens, 1997), though WRIAS' creators Helms and Carter (2002) suggest that researchers' address this threat by calculating their own reliability estimates for each subscale. Previous studies using the WRIAS (Constantine, et al., 2005; Puchner, Szabo, & Roseboro, 2012) decided against measuring a respondent's exact WRI status and instead classified the first three racial identity statuses as *Phase 1* and the second three racial identity statuses as *Phase 2*. Evaluating whether or not participants' WRI improved from Phase I to Phase II helps to minimize potential threats to internal validity that arise from measuring the six subscales of WRI independently.

Table 6 Outcome evaluation variables

Indicator	Role of Indicator	Data Source	Frequency	Responsibility
Pre- and posttest WRIAS administered to both treatment and comparison cohorts	To measure changes in participant's WRI before and after implementation of intervention (distal dependent variable)	60-item WRIAS (six subscales)	Administered twice: January, 2017 and April, 2017	Researcher
Pre- and post-course measure of cognitive dissonance administered to both treatment and comparison cohorts	To measure participants' level of cognitive dissonance when presented with racial information (proximal dependent variable)	Answers to open-ended race-related essay prompt designed to produced high, low, or no dissonance	Administered twice: January, 2017 and April, 2017	Researcher

Process Evaluation

Indicators of high fidelity of implementation as defined by Dusenbury, Brannigan, Falco, and Hansen (2003) include: (a) teacher training, (b) program characteristics, (c) teacher characteristics, and (d) organizational characteristics. Prior to the start of the semester, the researcher trained the other course instructor in how to implement direct instruction on cognitive dissonance theory and also how to provide opportunities for individual written participant reflection on their levels of dissonance. In terms of program characteristics, the authors suggest the use of explicitly stated essential elements and detailed instructional manuals. Guiding each course session and implementation of cognitive dissonance instruction and reflection was a detailed, scripted training plan that documented the amount of time to be devoted to instruction and reflection, as well as how it should be framed, facilitated, and debriefed. Teacher and program characteristics that promote fidelity of implementation include their individual and joint support of the intervention itself. Instructor support for the intervention is difficult to ascertain, because the researcher is functioning as the lead course instructor and is dictating its

implementation. Though the co-instructor voices support, it remains unclear whether she truly supported the intervention and whether she felt comfortable to voice dissent considering that the co-instructor is both researcher and supervisor in her role as program coordinator.

The proposed indicators of fidelity of implementation are detailed in the Data Collection Matrix (Table 4.2). In terms of adherence, the instructional designer/researcher monitored via a shared cloud drive the course syllabus, the weekly class training plans, and the Google Slides presentations created for course in order to determine whether she and her co-instructor had implemented the planned course schedule (see "Materials" box of attached Logic Model in Appendix A), content and processes (see "Class Structure" and "Instructional Delivery" boxes of attached Logic Model in Appendix A).

Dosage of the intervention will be assessed in a similar manner; the instructional designer/researcher will utilize a checklist to monitor the shared cloud drive housing the course syllabus, the weekly class training plans, and the Google Slides presentations created for the course. This allow for an assessment of whether the plans included direct instruction on cognitive dissonance theory, as well as at least five opportunities across the semester for individual written participant reflection on the dissonance triggered by certain course content (see "Instructional Delivery" box of attached Logic Model in Appendix A).

Monitoring quality of program delivery, participant responsiveness, and program differentiation provided a means to detect (a) the impact of the intervention components (resources and activities) that cause change, and also (b) can provide insight into whether successful implementation of these components will result in impact to the psychological

construct (WRI) that I aim to affect (Nelson, Cordray, Hullmen, Darrow, & Sommer, 2012). Quality of program delivery was assessed using college and researcher/instructor-created course evaluations at the end of the semester (April, 2017).

Most closely aligned to the theory of treatment guiding this intervention are the indicators of participant responsiveness and program differentiation. Measuring participant responsiveness to the class content and instructional delivery was key in order to determine if it indeed supports participant navigation of cognitive dissonance in order to promote the development of participants' non-racist WRIs. The instructional designer/researcher read and coded participant written reflections on their levels of cognitive dissonance related to certain course content. Additionally, student satisfaction data was collected at the end of the semester using college and researcher/instructor-created course. Comparison of student satisfaction data and their coded levels of dissonance allowed the researcher to investigate the connection between dissonance and internalization of course concepts that promote non-racist WRI.

It is through measurement of program differentiation, that the researcher ascertained how the treatment condition varied from the comparison condition in order to ensure that there was no slippage, or accidental delivery of the intervention to the comparison group (Dusenbury, Brannigan, Falco, and Hansen, 2003). Given that the program under study is comprised of multiple, interconnected features, it was important to detail which components each group received and how they varied by condition. Both groups were exposed to WRI theory and interracial dialogue in terms of course content and pedagogy. Only the treatment group, though, received explicit instruction in cognitive dissonance theory, as well as repeated opportunities to reflect on the presence of dissonance in their reactions to course content.

Table 7 Process evaluation indicators

Fidelity Indicator	Data Source(s)	Data Collection Tool	Frequency	Responsibility
Adherence Followed course schedule, and class structure Implemented training plans as written Implemented course agreements	Instructor reports Course Schedule Course documents	Open-response comments Checklist to review course syllabus, weekly training plans and course materials	Weekly via cloud-computing shared course drive	Instructional designer / program coordinator
Dose Implemented lecture on cognitive dissonance theory Directed participants to complete written reflections on their level of cognitive dissonance after key course content	Instructor reports	Checklist to review course syllabus, weekly training plans and course materials Completed participant written reflections (submitted online to the course site)	Dissonance theory lesson-2/2/17 Written reflections assigned on 2/2, 2/16, 3/2, 3/9, 3/23	Instructional designer / program coordinator
Quality of program delivery Instructor effectiveness Student satisfaction	Instructors Students	College and instructor/researcher-created course evaluations	4/26/17 (last class meeting of the semester)	Instructional designer / program coordinator
Participant responsiveness Student connection between course content and cognitive dissonance reduction	Students	Completed participant written reflections College and instructor/researcher-created course evaluations	Written reflections assigned on 2/2, 2/16, 3/2, 3/9, 3/23 End of course evaluation 4/26	Instructors Instructional designer / program coordinator
Program differentiation Student written reflection on content that triggered dissonance and how they resolved it and WRI development	Students	Participants' coded written reflections on cognitive dissonance, WRI	Written reflections assigned on 2/2, 2/16, 3/2, 3/9, 3/23	Instructional designer / program coordinator

Method

Participants and Sampling

This context of this study was a five-course MTE program for in-service educators in the large Mid-Atlantic suburban Carver Public Schools district. The MTE program under study is composed of cohorts of graduate students who move through the program in cycles (Shaddish, Cook, and Campbell, 2002). Upon admission, program participants opt into courses that meet either on weeknights (odd numbered cohorts) or weekends (even numbered cohorts). In Spring 2017, cohort ME9 completed their second course (Appendix B) in the program (Race and Ethnicity in American Education) on Thursday nights while a parallel cohort (ME8) completed the same course on weekends. Simultaneously, cohort ME7 completed its final two courses in the program on weeknights, and ME6 did so on weekends.

The treatment group consisted of White participants enrolled in the ME9 weeknight cohort. This particular cohort is 68% White (n=17), making it the least diverse in the program's history (the ME8 weekend cohort is only 19% White). To be eligible for inclusion in the treatment group, participants had successfully completed the first course in the MTE program and were enrolled in the second. They also had to identify racially as White. On the first day of class in the semester, all students (White and non-White) in the ME9 cohort were informed of the study and its objectives, though course participants of Color were excluded from the study since it focuses on the experience of White participants in the program. White course participants in the treatment group were informed of the opportunity to submit their course documents for analysis after their final semester grades had been posted. At the last class session, all ME9 cohort members (White and non-White) completed the post-course post-assessment of racial identity as it

was already structured into course procedures. White participants were asked to formally consent to having their course products included in the analysis. Of the 17 possible participants, 13 (76%) consented to having their written course products included in the study's qualitative analysis.

The study utilized a nonequivalent comparison (cohort) group design with dependent pretest and posttest samples (Shaddish, Cook, and Campbell, 2002). Students in the second year of the program (cohorts ME6 and ME7) served as an untreated comparison group. Eleven of the ME6 and ME7 participants were White and the focus of recruitment efforts. The use of students in their second year of the certificate program as a comparison group presumes that "selection differences are smaller between cohorts than would be the case between noncohort comparison groups" (Shaddish, Cook, and Campbell, 2002, p. 149). Participants in the comparison group were recruited via email and indicated electronic consent before completing the racial identity and cognitive dissonance measures online as well. Of the 11 potential comparison group participants, 10 opted into the study (91%).

Measures

Pre-Post WRI and Dissonance Measures. Subjects in both the treatment (Xt) and comparison (Xc) groups were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: high dissonance (HI), low dissonance, (LO), or no dissonance (NO). During their second class meeting of the semester (Xt) or once recruited electronically (Xc), participants completed a pre-course 60-item racial identity assessment (WRIAS) in which they indicated agreement with statements designed to identify their level of WRI (1- strongly disagree, 5- strongly agree). They then completed a multiple measure survey (Appendix C) designed to provoke high, low, or no dissonance depending on the condition to which the

participant had been assigned. Regardless of condition, participants completed the following tasks in sequential order: (a) introductory manipulation, (b) attitude measure, (c) affect measure, (d) essay prompt, (e) affect change measure, (f) attitude change measure, (h) choice manipulation check, (i) effort check, and (j) attitude importance check. These tasks included:

Introductory manipulation. All participants read the following introductory paragraph (procedure modified from Elliot & Devine, 1994):

> The coordinators are interested in ensuring that the program gives equal representation and airtime to a diverse set of perspectives on race and racism. One way to measure our success in this endeavor is to have students craft short responses to a variety of statements about the salience of race in our country and educational system.

Initial attitude and attitude-change measure. Similarly to Elliot and Devine (1994), participants responded to items designed to measure their racial attitudes both before and after the essay-writing task. The repetition of attitude questions aimed to measure any dissonance-induced attitude change following the essay-writing portion of the experiment. Participants were instructed to indicate their agreement with seven questions (based on Neville, Lilly, Lee, Duran, & Browne, 2000) about the salience of race in the United States (e.g. Race is very important in determining who is successful and who is not.) by circling the appropriate number next to each descriptor (1= *strongly agree*; 5 = *strongly disagree*).

Affect measure. Again mirroring the work of Elliot and Devine (1994), the affect measure was comprised of 14 items that represent a variety of dissonance-related terms (e.g. *uncomfortable*) and other feeling words not related to dissonance (e.g. *energetic*).

Non-dissonance related items were included to measure the distinct presence of dissonance-related changes to affect following the essay-writing portion of the experiment. Participants were instructed to indicate how they are feeling right now by circling the appropriate number next to each descriptor (1= *does not apply at all*; 5 = *applies very much*). They completed this measure both before and after the essay writing portion task.

Essay prompt. Participants were then informed that program coordinators were collecting arguments on both sides of a current race-related issue in order to determine their abilities to provide representation of diverse viewpoints.

Participants in the no dissonance (NO), no cue condition then read the following prompt:

> You have been selected to respond *against* the statement "All Lives Matter". Please only take 5-7 minutes to compose your essay in the space provided.

Participants in the low dissonance (LO) negative cue condition read this prompt:

> You have been selected to respond *in support* of the statement "All Lives Matter". Though you may find this task difficult and/or unpleasant, please take 5-7 minutes to compose your essay in the space provided.

Finally, participants in the high dissonance (HI), positive cue condition read this prompt:

> You have been selected to respond *in support* of the statement "All Lives Matter". So, while we would like to stress the voluntary nature of your participation in this exercise, the coordinators would appreciate strong, forceful arguments that support many diverse viewpoints. This task should be easy and/or pleasant, so please only take 5-7 minutes to compose your essay in the space provided.

Choice manipulation check, effort, and attitude importance measures. In order to check the efficacy of the choice manipulation in each condition (Elliot & Devine,

1994), participants were asked, "How much choice did you have to write or not write this essay?" (1= *no choice at all;* 10= *a great deal of choice*). They were then asked, "How much effort did you put into thinking about and writing the essay? (1= *no effort at all;* 10= *a great deal of effort*). Finally, participants indicated the importance of importance of racial attitudes by responding to the prompt "How important are the issues of institutional and structural racism to you?" (1= *not important at all*; 10= *very important*).

Formative Dissonance Measure. After five of the 11 class meetings, participants created a written reflection about their experience of dissonance in relation to the session's content. Reflections were guided by the following prompts:

Describe any cognitive dissonance that you experienced as a result of today's content.

What pre-existing cognitions triggered this dissonance?

If you did not experience dissonance, describe any new/enhanced understandings you have.

Procedure

Intervention. After the collection of pre-course WRIAS and dissonance data, the research/instructor provided explicit instruction in theory and examples of cognitive dissonance to the treatment group during one class meeting. Then, strategically throughout the semester, participants were asked to reflect, in writing, on content predicted to both trigger dissonance as well as prompt WRI development.

Data Collection. Students reflected on key course content in online reflective journal entries after select class sessions. Other key assignments challenged them to explore both the literature and the experience of a member of another racial group and his oppression in the U.S. educational system. At the end of the course, participants in both

the treatment and comparison completed a post-course WRIAS and the open-ended cognitive dissonance assessment. Participants in both groups also completed the college-provided course evaluation (Table 4.3), as well as a researcher-instructor created evaluation (Xt only), which asked them to reflect on course content and assignments.

Table 8 Sample questions from college-provided course evaluation

Number	Question
Q8	What were the strongest aspects of the course?
Q9	What changes or improvements would you recommend?
Q10	Was the course challenging? Why or why not?

Data Analysis and Summary Matrix. Quantitative pre-course WRIAS and qualitative cognitive dissonance assessment data were used to estimate a baseline WRI level for participants in both the treatment and comparison groups. In line with the grounded theory approach to analysis of qualitative data, narrative participant responses to pre-and post-course cognitive dissonance assessments as well as the ones collected formatively from the treatment group were coded using emergent categories (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). Formative cognitive dissonance written reflections of the treatment group included participant reaction to key course concepts (e.g. racism, privilege) and whether these concepts aligned with their pre-existing attitudes and beliefs (cognitions) or did not and thus sparked dissonance. After conducting an initial reading of the reflections, the researcher created several categories, or codes, that represent how participants gave voice to experienced dissonance as well as which course concepts triggered it and how participants chose to resolve the dissonance.

In order to increase the internal validity of the analysis, the researcher engaged in member checking (Saldana, 2015), in conjunction with a trained research assistant (a graduate of the program). The researcher trained the sponsor to code the narrative written

reflection data using the codes that emerged during the initial coding phase, and she acted as a second coder for 100% of the data (written reflections). The pair aimed for .80 inter-rater agreement or higher. For entries in which .80 agreement was not reached, the two reviewed and refined the coding categories being applied and recoded another 20% of the data in order to reassess reliability. The data from the pre-post course assessment of cognitive dissonance as well as the ongoing written reflections was triangulated (Saldana, 2015), in order to identify categories or themes that emerged across the data over time. The researcher and assistant also drafted analytic memos throughout the coding process (Saldana, 2015), in order to capture the inquiry process, the emergent categories and themes, and how these might be used to build or refine existing theory about the intersection of cognitive dissonance and WRI. These memos functioned as an audit trail (Saldana, 2015), and provided a roadmap of all the research decisions thus enhancing potential external validity and generalizability. The data collection and analysis procedures and alignment to the research questions guiding this study are summarized in the table below.

Table 9 Variable summary matrix

Research Question	Measure / Operationalization of Variable	Data Collection	Data Analysis
What relationship exists between cognitive dissonance and White participants' experience in the program?	Levels of dissonance detected between course content and participant attitude	Participants' written reflections on the experience of dissonance around key course content Course evaluations (college and researcher/instructor-created)	Initial and emergent coding Member-checking Analytic memos
How does cognitive dissonance impact participants' persistence in an MTE course and program?	Program administrative data	Program administrative data- roster of enrollees for next/third course in the five-course sequences	Persistence and attrition rates by race/ethnicity and cohort

How does knowledge of and reflection on cognitive dissonance impact participants' WRI?	Pre-post intervention WRI level	Pre- and posttest 60-item WRIAS (Helms & Carter, 1990) administered to both treatment and comparison cohorts	Split-plot ANOVA for Xt and Xc groups WRIAS item analysis

Limitations

A major limitation of this design is its inability to control for the threat to internal validity posed by selection bias. Participants in both the treatment and comparison cohort groups are White educators who have self-selected into an MTE program designed to challenge their thinking about race and its impact on education. It is not unreasonable to conclude that participants who select into such a program may have a higher-status WRI upon entry, as people with lower level WRI often avoid acknowledging race (Michael, 2015). Though participants' self-selection into the program and its relationship to their pretest WRI is not something the researcher can reasonably address, accounting for selection bias between the treatment and comparison cohorts is feasible and desired. Selection bias undermines the assumption that the treatment and comparison groups would have the same outcome without treatment especially in absence of a clear process delineating how a participant is selected into a certain group (Stein, 2015). Matching participants on non-redundant units that potentially impact outcomes and participation in both the treatment and comparison cohorts helps to ensure that the comparison group is as similar as possible to the treatment group (Stein, 2015). Participants in both the ME9 (treatment) and ME6/7 (comparison) could be matched according to years teaching experience, education levels, gender, etc. Though increasing the number of covariates that are used to match participants in each group is ideal for reducing differences between the two groups (Henry, 2010), doing so also decreases the likelihood of finding exact matches between participants when using a large number of covariates.

Conclusion

The literature on the WRI of in-service educators is scant, as is the research base connecting WRI and cognitive dissonance. Helms (1990) notes explicitly that White individuals in the Contact phase of WRI experience cognitive dissonance as their previous colorblind cognition about race collides with new information about the salience of race and racism in the lives of individuals of color. The intersection of these conflicting cognitions pushes them into the Disintegration phase of WRI, when their previous ideologies about race literally *disintegrate* and are replaced by new unsettling notions. White individuals resolve this cognitive dissonance by reverting to their old colorblind attitudes about race (hence why the third WRI phase is termed *Re*integration), which are often accompanied by feelings of anger and blame toward persons of Color and other Whites who acknowledge the impact of race and racism. White individuals who wish to progress beyond the Reintegration phase of WRI must commit to experiencing further cognitive dissonance and allowing new cognitions about race to conflict with their previously held attitudes and beliefs. The literature on WRI and Helms' model itself does not detail the experience of cognitive dissonance that individuals in Phase 2 of WRI continue to face. This investigation is an attempt to document and shed light on this continued disequilibrium in order to explain the potential connection between sustained negotiation of dissonance about race and the development of a non-racist WRI.

Chapter 5: Intervention Implementation

Course Description

The class was held once a week for 11 weeks. Each class meeting was approximately three hours with additional time spent completing online tasks. A variety of pedagogical strategies were employed in service of helping students to (a) develop a greater awareness of their own racial and cultural identities and the impact these have had on their educational experience, (b) gain a deeper understanding of the sociocultural, political, and historical factors that have impacted the educational experiences of students in oppressed racial and ethnic groups. Class sessions were designed to provide multiple opportunities for dialogue as well as introspective private reflection. Instructional methods included structured whole, small group, and paired inter-racial dialogue, intra-racial affinity group dialogue, video clips, current events/media, role-plays, collaborative text analysis strategies, and individual written reflection. Topics central to the course included: intersectionality, racial identity development theory, deculturalization, colorblindness, levels of racism, White dominant culture, privilege, myth of meritocracy, microaggressions, detour-spotting, and critical race theory.

Cognitive Dissonance Instruction

After the pre-course WRIAS and cognitive dissonance baseline data was collected, the intervention began during the second class session for the treatment group. The researcher-instructor delivered a mini-lecture to students about the theory of cognitive dissonance. This lecture included an activator (Gorski, 2009) in which students matched quotes with the famous American leaders who said them (for example, a quote from Abraham Lincoln states that his goal is not to end slavery, though this sentiment is often erroneously attributed to him) in an effort to spark cognitive dissonance between

two cognitions- their previous impression of each leader and their actual words. The researcher-instructor then summarized Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance, as well as the three ways in which individuals can resolve it (change one's behavior, change one's attitude, or change/rationalize the importance of the behavior or attitude. Next, the instructor shared personal examples of when she had experienced cognitive dissonance and invited participants to share their own as well. Finally, she pre-alerted students that they may experience dissonance triggered by both course content and discussion, and that she had built in structured ways for them to reflect on the experience of dissonance and how they decided to resolve it.

Qualitative Participant Data

Students reflected on key course content (racial identity development, White dominant culture, privilege, prejudice, discrimination, levels of racism, reverse racism, myth of meritocracy, personal experience panel, and Lee Mun Wah's (1994) *The Color of Fear*) in written reflective journals that were begun in class and completed online between class sessions. They utilized course texts, and class activities and discussions to process their reactions to the content and whether or not it triggered cognitive dissonance for them. Students conducted an interview with a member of another racial or ethnic group in order to create a "counter story" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) of their educational experience compared to that of members of the White dominant culture. They also crafted short literature reviews in which they synthesized relevant literature about a self-selected topic (e.g. permanence of racism, privilege, racial identity development, anti-racism).

Findings

RQ1. What relationship exists between cognitive dissonance and White participants' experience in the program?

Participants' general course experience was gauged through analysis of quantitative and qualitative data from two summative course evaluations, one college-generated (52% response rate) and one instructor-generated (88% response rate). Unfortunately, neither tool disaggregated responses by race, making it impossible to isolate White participant responses for detailed analysis. On the college course evaluation, participants identified class discussion as the strongest aspect of the course (69%, n=9). Similarly, on the instructor-created tool, participants identified whole-class discussion (77%, n=17) and paired or small group discussion (77%, n=17) as the course structures that made them feel "safe and/or supported" in their learning. Other structures that added to their feelings of safety and support included: instructor support (64%, n=14), developing a common vocabulary (59%, n=13), and utilizing community agreements (Singleton & Linton, 2006) when discussing race (55%, n=12). Few participants reported that learning about cognitive dissonance theory itself (36%, n=8) or reflective journaling about their dissonance (27%, n=6) helped them to feel safe and/or supported. On the college evaluation, respondents also noted that the course helped them to improve their oral expression (69% improved or greatly improved). Given this feedback, it appears that interracial dialogue had a greater positive relationship on participants' experience in the program than did instruction about and reflection on their dissonance.

RQ2. How does cognitive dissonance impact participants' persistence in an MTE course and program?

Two White participants initially expressed uncertainty about whether they would continue with the program when it resumed in the fall. One shared that although he enjoys the content and the class meetings immensely, he no longer wishes to complete the course assignments as he already has a master's degree and does not "want to work that hard anymore" at this point in his career. He has asked the college if he may audit the remaining three courses in the program. The other expressed concern about the final semester of the program (slated for Spring 2018) when the cohort will complete two back-to-back courses. She worried that she will be unable to balance the coursework with the demands of her job as she had already struggled to do so when taking just one course per semester.

In the course evaluation, one participant stated:

> "This course could use a makeover. The materials we read and studied were often very dated. I also think we did not spend enough time doing assignments that would be easily transferable to our current work as educators. It is my opinion that the instructor spent too much time concerned about us experiencing cognitive dissonance during our class and not enough time addressing the real issues we face as educators. I am an open-minded, educated, White, women who thrives in a multi-cultural family and society. I am not afraid to discuss race or racial issues such as racism, social injustice, etc. It is also my opinion that the assignments often felt like "busy work" instead of valuable experiences that would benefit me in my work as an educator. After taking 2 of these courses I do not plan to continue with this certification program."

Since the course evaluations are completed anonymously, it is unknown whether this comment came from the White female participant who had verbally stated her apprehension with continuing or whether it represents a third participant who may not continue. Ultimately, all participants, White and of color, registered for the third course and are continuing in the program despite any expressed hesitation (Table 5.1). It remains unknown whether or not cognitive dissonance impacted their initial decision to discontinue the program. Only one of the three consented to having her course materials included in this study and she persistently denied experiencing any dissonance during the course. Instructor observation of the other two participants indicated that they too failed to disclose any dissonance they may have experienced and often used their own experiences of diversity (being married to a Black man; being homosexual) to divert conversation away from race and racism.

Table 10 Attrition rate by cohort

	Attrition Rate- Overall/White			
Cohort	During or After 1st course	During or After 2nd course	During or After 3rd course	During or After 4th course
ME1	2/0	0/0	1/1	1/0
ME2	0/0	1/0	2/0	0/0
ME3	1/0	2/2	1/0	0/0
ME4	4/2	3/2	5/3	0/0
ME5	4/3	2/0	1/1	0/0
ME6	2/1	1/0	0/0	0/0
ME7	0/0	2/1	1/1	0/0
ME8	0/0	0/0	n/a	n/a
ME9	0/0	0/0	n/a	n/a

RQ3. How does knowledge of and reflection on cognitive dissonance impact participants' WRI?

White Racial Identity development. Raw scale scores were calculated for each participant on the pre-post WRIAS by summing item responses across each of the six

WRIAS statuses. In each status, higher scores reflected greater respondent endorsement of using the schemas associated with that status to respond to racial information. Table 5.2 displays the pre-posttest means for each of the six statuses by group.

Table 11 Pre-post WRIAS means for treatment (Xt) and comparison (Xc) groups

	Xt		Xc	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Contact	25.10	36.00	24.86	32.86
Disintegration	33.70	41.30	34.43	37.86
Reintegration	45.40	46.30	46.43	45.00
Pseudo-Independence	23.90	33.40	21.71	35.43
Immersion-Emersion	22.90	40.90	20.29	42.29
Autonomy	27.70	36.80	24.86	36.85

A split-plot ANOVA (Table 5.3) examined the pre-post WRIAS means between the treatment and comparison groups over time. Findings are presented for both groups and reveal that for the first three phases of WRI (Contact, Disintegration, and Reintegration), the treatment group's decreasing endorsement of these phases over time was statistically significant ($p < .10$ level) compared to those of the comparison group. Figures 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3 illustrate the treatment group's decreasing endorsement of Contact, Disintegration, and Reintegration statuses over time respectively, as indicated by higher post-WRIAS means in those phases.

Table 12 Split-Plot ANOVA of pre- and post-WRIAS for within subjects by condition

	df	*Error df*	*F*	*p*
Contact	1	15	3.189	.094
Disintegration	1	15	7.782	.014
Reintegration	1	15	3.141	.097
Pseudo-Independence	1	15	2.563	.130
Immersion-Emersion	1	15	.950	.345
Autonomy	1	15	1.058	.320

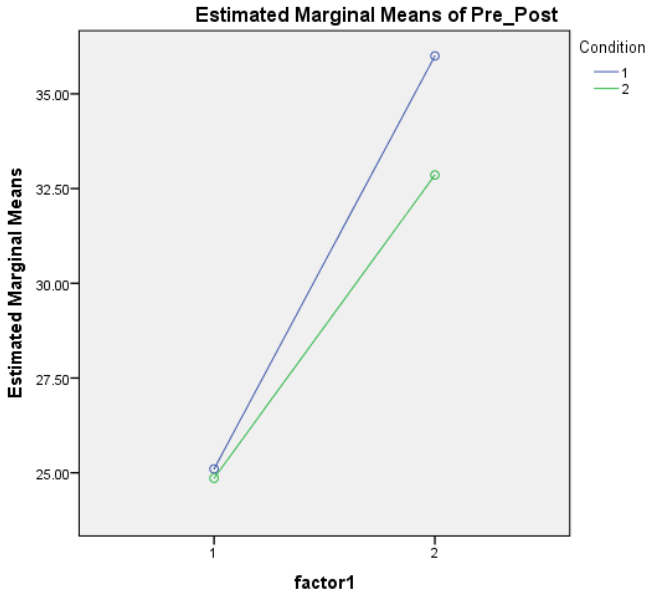

Figure 3 Plot of Contact phase pre- and post-test means for the treatment and comparison groups

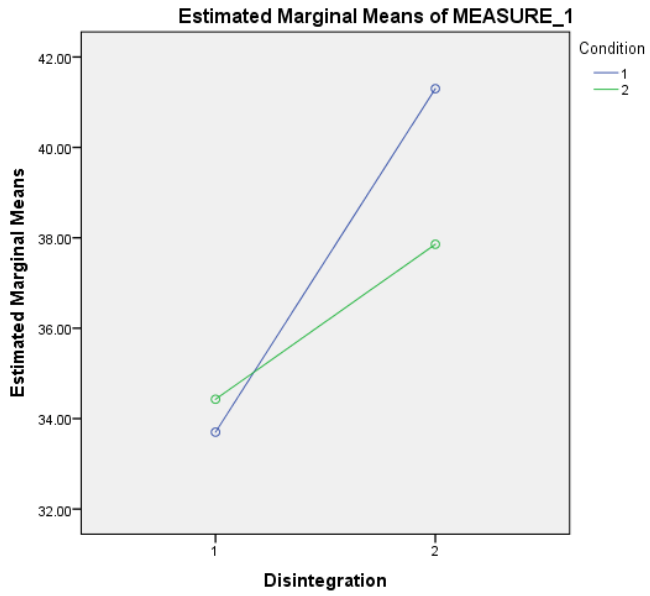

Figure 4 Plot of Disintegration phase pre- and post-test means for the treatment and comparison groups

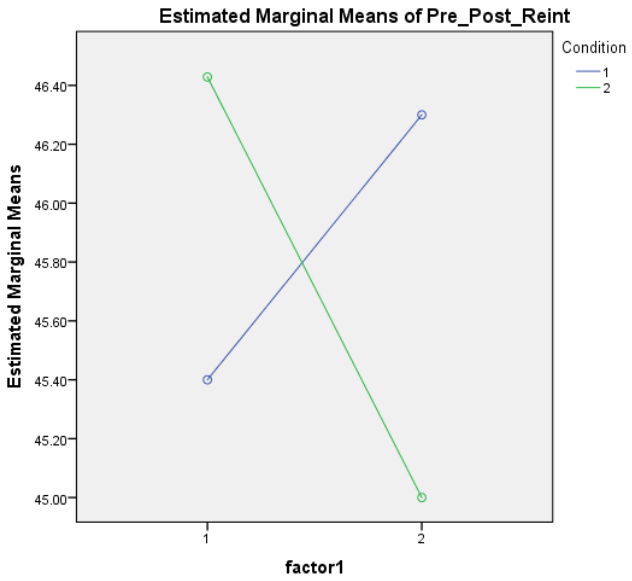

Figure 5 Plot of Reintegration phase pre- and post-test means for the treatment and comparison groups

Reflecting on their initial WRI phase. Data from the pre-course WRIAS revealed that treatment group participants entered the course with varying levels of racial identity development. After completing the pre-course WRIAS, participants received their initial WRI status (reported anonymously using their self-chosen identification number) and were asked to reflect on it in light of WRID theory.

Contact. Four participants whose WRIAS scores indicated a contact phrase WRI expressed surprise at their results: "I knew I would be early in the development but I thought I was at least in the second stage," "I thought I was further along in my development than that!" and "I definitely have a lot of curiosity but I wouldn't have thought I was naive...so maybe it was naive of me to think that way!" One admitted that the descriptors of that phase fit her well "I never really think about my race or my ethnicity." One participant speculated that she was moving from contact into disintegration:

> "Taking this survey was very eye opening. I realized that I'm in the disintegration part of my racial identity. Taking the survey had me think about and questions things that I rarely think about. I realized I'm living in a world where I think everything is okay with blinders on. Not really in tune with what is happening around me and that is because I'm blinded by my own race and advantages of my own race. It has caused me to reflect more and think more about what really is going on in the world around me and how I can be the change."

Pseudo-Independence. The five participants whose pre-course WRIAS indicated a pseudo-independent WRI expressed mostly surprise and disappointment with their results. One stated, "I am disappointed by my results… I would like to think I am more advanced than that!" One rejected the false sense of racial mastery that impacts Whites in this phase: "at this point I have done a good amount of study on racism, but I don't think that I feel/act like I know it all." One outright rejected the results, "I actually don't know if it is a true reflection. I felt the questions required responses rather than blanket statements." Two others embraced their status, "The definition of pseudo-independent matches me, however, I don't really understand or know how I fit into the other boxes going across the model. I am excited to learn from this and see my progression throughout the class," and "Although I am not currently satisfied with where I am, it gives me direction for where I need to be."

Immersion-Emersion. The three participants who began the course in this phase according to the pre-course WRIAS took issue with specific descriptors of their status (as presented to them in Michael, 2015) rather than their score as a whole. One respondent stated "I do feel that I know a fair amount about my race and I am currently trying to learn about others and redefining myself" which exemplifies this stage in which one

immerses herself in racial learning and emerges with a new non-racist identity. One said, "Since starting this course I have been self-conscious about being white. I feel a bit of relief being within the Immersion-Emersion stage…" but disagreed that she worried about losing friends when speaking against racism, stating, "I stand up for what I believe in - no matter what." A third respondent reflected, "I always feel that I am not quite there, and this stage makes sense," though she then proceeded to intellectualize to what degree her responses reflected her introverted nature as opposed to her racism or lack thereof.

Autonomy. Only one respondent scored an autonomous WRI on the pre-course WRIAS, to which she replied, "I received autonomy but I feel like I am always still learning and growing and have much more growing to do." This highest level of WRI was clearly desirable to at least one other respondent:

> "I was classified as pseudo-independent … I do not overlook and rationalize biases or deny that prejudice exists. I argue with people on FB about the existence of white privilege all the time. My daughters do, too! But then I also don't think Immersion/Emersion describes me either because I have very little interest in exploring my ethnic heritage. Been there, done that. I'm white, not particularly ethnic, can trace my roots back to the Mayflower, ho hum. I suppose it's presumptuous of me to think I fall in the Autonomy stage, but at least when I read the description, that's where I think I am, or at least where I aspire to be. I think the main issue may be that I don't live in a very diverse community or work in a diverse school. I grew up with diverse family members, but still in a White world. So maybe my choices in life don't match my values."

Cognitive dissonance measures

Affect and attitudes changes. Preliminary descriptive analysis of the affect and attitude changes on the pre-and posttest cognitive dissonance measure suggest that participants did not show a change in time in their levels of cognitive dissonance. The high-dissonance condition yielded greater post-essay-writing dissonance as indicated by participant agreement that they felt "uncomfortable," "uneasy," "ashamed with self," or other negative affects after writing it, whereas participants in the low-dissonance or no-dissonance conditions reported little or no post-essay-writing dissonance-induced affect. Results indicate that writing a counter-attitudinal essay can induce dissonance under certain conditions (Brehm & Cohen, 1962; Cohen, 1962; Elliot & Devine, 1994; Goethals & Cooper, 1975; Goethals, Cooper, & Naficy, 1979; Linder, et al., 1967), but yielded little insight into the impact of this dissonance on pre-post essay writing racial attitudes or race-related dissonance pre- and post-intervention.

Reflective journals. Coding of participant reflective journals yielded emergent themes including (a) evidence of dissonance, (b) what type of cognitive conflict gave rise to the dissonance (attitude v. attitude, attitude v. behavior, or prior v. new knowledge), (c) how the participant chose to resolve the dissonance, as well as (d) the course content or experience that triggered the dissonance. Each concept was further quantified in order to see patterns in participants' experience of dissonance. Evidence of dissonance included use of feeling words such as "uneasy," "guilt," "defensive" in about half (48%, n = 90) of the identified instances. Participants also explicitly stated that they experienced dissonance in another 40% (n=78) of instances. Course content, or a cognitive conflict between prior v. newly acquired *knowledge* accounted for about half (45%, n=57) of reported instances of dissonance, followed closely by a conflict between an individual's

newly acquired *racial attitude* (often triggered by a new or revised understanding of a concept) and his current or past behavior (36%, n=45). In terms of resolving dissonance, participants most often spoke of the need to change their behavior in order to bring it into alignment with their new racial attitudes (30%, n=26) or by "leaning into" and experiencing the dissonance between two conflicting attitudes (24%, n=21).

White Racial Identity development and cognitive dissonance. In order to further discern what, if any, connections exist between participants' experience of dissonance and their WRI development, they were asked "What course content prompted the most growth for you in terms of your racial identity development?" on the researcher/instructor-created course evaluation. Participant responses were triangulated (Saldana, 2015) with coded patterns from their reflective journals in order to identify connections between course content (that is designed specifically to progress sequentially through the phases of WRI) and noted participant dissonance (Table 5.4).

Table 13 Course content and its reported impact on WRI and dissonance experienced

Course Content	Promoted WRI (Survey- % of respondents who indicated agreement)	Prompted Dissonance (Journals- % of coded responses)
White dominant culture	59%	17%
Racial privilege	59%	17%
Levels of racism	55%	4%
Counter storytelling	50%	9%
Racial identity theory	46%	17%
Myth of meritocracy	32%	13%

Participants reported that study of White dominant culture and racial privilege had the greatest impact on the WRI development, and also sparked the greatest amount of dissonance detailed in the written journal responses (17% each of total incidences of reported dissonance; n=18 each). Learning about the institutional and structural levels of

racism (55%) and hearing about the educational experiences of peers of color (50%) were also reported as key to participants' WRI development, though these concepts prompted little recorded dissonance (4% and 9% of recorded instances respectively). Learning about White Racial Identity theory itself promoted WRI development (46% of respondents agreed) and also produced a fair amount of dissonance (17% of recorded instances). Completing the WRIAS and receiving a score indicative of their current WRI status sparked marked dissonance in many participants, who expressed a desire to have earned a more advanced phase or reported needing to further their learning and experience in order to grow racially.

To further investigate potential connections between the experience of dissonance and WRI-aligned course content, post-hoc analysis of specific WRIAS questions was conducted. Though not common in research utilizing the WRIAS, this analysis allowed the researcher to examine phase-specific changes over time across groups. No significant difference existed between the treatment and comparison groups on individual test items, though there were significant changes in pre- and post-test means across both groups as measured by a split plot ANOVA (Table 5.5). In both groups, agreement with items aligned to Immersion-Emersion ("Given the chance, I would work with other White people to discover what being White means to me," "I am involved in discovering how other White people have defined themselves as White people") and Autonomy ("I involve myself in causes regardless of the race of people involved in them") WRIs changed significantly over time ($p = .0007$, $p = .003$, and $p = .0002$ respectively. Participants in both groups also disagreed more strongly with a Contact-status statement ("I hardly ever think about what race I am"), indicating a distancing from colorblind

Table 14 Item-specific changes over time across treatment and comparison groups

WRIAS Item	*Pre-test mean*	*Post-test mean*	*F*	*p*
I hardly ever think about what race I am.	3.37	4.32	7.97	.008
I involve myself in causes regardless of the race of the people involved in them.	2.63	4.26	23.89	.0002
Rather than focusing on other races, I am searching for information to help me understand White people.	3.21	2.95	0.66	.042
When a Black person holds an opinion with which I disagree, I am not afraid to express my opinion.	2.73	3.63	6.21	.017
I am involved in discovering how other White people have positively defined themselves as White people.	2.79	3.68	10.04	.003
Sometimes I am not sure what I think or feel about Black people.	3.89	3.68	0.38	.054
Given the chance, I would work with other White people to discover what being White means to me.	2.63	3.79	13.66	.0007
I believe that White people cannot have a meaningful discussion about racism unless there is a Black or other minority person present to help them understand the effects of racism.	2.37	2.32	0.02	.88

thinking over time spent in the program. Significant at the $p < .10$ level, participants endorsed other statements also indicative of Immersion-Emersion and Autonomy WRI ("Rather than focusing on other races, I am searching for information to help me understand White people" and "When a Black person holds an opinion with which I disagree, I am not afraid to express my opinion,") which changed significantly over time ($p = .042$ and $p = .017$ respectively). These changes over time do not help to explain the connection between dissonance and WRI, but may offer evidence that participants' WRI and endorsement of statements indicative of non-racist higher-level WRI do grow over time spent in the program.

Discussion

Findings suggest that MTE designers can promote transformational adult learning (Mezirow, 2000) by strategically including course content and pedagogy to develop participant understanding of both the psychological and sociological aspects of Whiteness. MTE designers can utilize WRI development and cognitive dissonance theory in order to help participants navigate the intense emotions that often accompany learning about the sociological aspects of Whiteness, White dominance, and racial privilege. Many White educators have not previously considered themselves members of a racial group nor seen how this membership impacts the expectations and norms they have for students. Understanding both WRI and cognitive dissonance theory can help normalize their reactions to this new learning. Specifically, designers of MTE can deliberately create what Mezirow (2000) calls "disorienting dilemmas". Through use of these dilemmas, MTE designers can create learning experiences designed to deliberately provoke dissonance in participants in order help them challenge and even change their perspectives on race. Though usually triggered by life changes or transitions (Mezirow, 2000), disorienting dilemmas can also be purposely built into adult learning experiences. Some of the experiences structured into the course featured in this study served to provoke disorientation in participants. This disorientation, or dissonance, served to promote WRI development and included: taking the (a) WRIAS and (b) IAT and reflecting on their results, (c) learning about the existence of White culture, and (d) participating in interracial dialogue.

Disorienting Dilemma I: Taking the WRIAS

Rebecca's (pseudonym) pre-post WRIAS scores indicated a Contact phase WRI, though her journals yielded greater insight into her identity development. Rebecca

explicitly detailed her struggles with cognitive dissonance (40 instances across five journal entries) as she progressed through the course. Her first entry documents the dissonance that taking the WRIAS triggered in her as "my prior experiences led me to answer certain questions one way, yet at the same time, while I was answering them, I wanted to choose a different answer." This reflection itself hints at not only the social desirability of certain WRIAS items, but also indicates that Rebecca is not processing racial information from a colorblind Contact phase WRI. She elaborated how a past experience of living in a predominantly Black area had led her to feel anxious when she is the only White in a group of Blacks (a WRIAS item). She noted how she struggled in answering that question "I wrote agree; however, I don't want to agree… the reality of my answer versus what I *wish* [her emphasis] the answer was caused me to feel uncomfortable." The WRIAS items challenged Rebecca to consider what kind of White person she is ("wishing race played a greater role in my life... wishing I was a White woman who thought of her 'Whiteness' as a defining characteristic") an indication of disintegration status WRI or higher. Cross-racial interactions still make Rebecca uncomfortable and her increased knowledge of racial inequities clearly triggers feelings of guilt and embarrassment for her.

Disorienting Dilemma II: Taking the IAT

The journals of another participant, Holly (pseudonym), also shed light on the dissonance that White participants experience in trying to move from Pseudo-Independence into Immersion-Emersion phase processing of racial information. Holly notes feeling encouraged by her initial WRIAS results (Pseudo-Independence) as she was "towards the top but still had room to improve." After completing the Race Implicit Attitudes Test (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998) during class, Holly noted that

her IAT results were "frustrating and upsetting… to be further into the course and complete another task that hints at the fact that I have prejudicial attitudes is frustrating." She further explains that though she often feels discomfort in discussing race, she views herself "as someone who is not racist." The IAT prompted dissonance for her, she notes, because she does not feel as if she has a "moderate preference for white people," and admits to immediately wanting to blame the test itself (a common reaction detailed in Clark and Zygmunt, 2014). Holly further details mounting feelings of frustration as the course progresses and she no longer wants to "feel embarrassed or ashamed and instead able to confidently discuss the [racial] issues that exist in our country."

Disorienting Dilemma III: Learning about the Existence of White Culture

In a later entry, Rebecca struggles through the dissonance induced by realizing the existence of a White dominant culture. She admitted to thinking "White culture isn't a *thing*, it's just 'normal'," and detailed how sharing verbally with her classmates that she does not view herself as White caused discomfort given the course's focus on the salience of race in education. Rebecca also detailed conflicting cognitions about wanting to teach her students the King's English and "proper mechanics and usage," but feeling uncomfortable "forcing White cultur[al]" standards on to them. She also questioned whether her desire for promptness led her to "look down upon students… who are consistently late." Rebecca also experienced dissonance in response to a group activity that asked participants to brainstorm what privilege looks and sounds like: "common themes included White, English-speaking, middle-class, typically-developing, and well-educated. While these are all characteristics that are attributed to being privileged, these are also all characteristics that I identify with," she noted. Pondering the myth of meritocracy triggered dissonance in Rebecca as she struggled with "not wanting to accept

the fact that hard work or qualifications alone won't guarantee that someone will be successful; success is influenced by other factors and characteristics as well." Rebecca's dissonance resulted from cognitive conflict over "what I want to believe and what I know is true."

Her most poignant reflections indicated feelings of guilt when she thought about blindly giving assignments (build your dream house), encouraging competition among students, and assigning students to (racially-segregated) leveled reading groups that reflect White dominant norms. "Is it my fault," she asks, "or is it the fault of our society, school system, and the resources put in place? I can't help but feel guilty…" Rebecca's later thinking in the course is more indicative of a pseudo-independent WRI as she begins to acknowledge a White person's responsibility in the perpetuation of racism. Though individuals in this phase may still inadvertently perpetrate racism, educators who take the time to interrogate the impact of their instructional choices may be better able to interrupting long-standing patterns of educational inequity. In her final entry, Rebecca acknowledges,

> "I don't think I would have had these uncomfortable feelings before enrolling in the program, and while I may not be where I want to be just yet (with regards to my racial identity and ability to combat racism), I definitely feel as though I have made progress."

Her commitment to the MTE program coursework and the dissonance it elicits has helped her to progress toward attaining a non-racist WRI, something about which she feels proud.

Holly realizes that her socialization as a member of the White racial group has influenced her racial identity:

> "Perhaps the preference I have towards white people is not just my own doing, but also due to the conditioning that I have faced in society… the implicit bias of the structures that I am surrounded by, and how they have discreetly influenced me over time."

Holly's reflections align with the findings of Lawrence and Tatum's (1999) study of two undergraduate and graduate multicultural and anti-racist courses for current and preservice educators. The authors found in-service to be more advanced in their WRI than the pre-service educators:

> "Many of the White veteran teachers entering the in-service course, on the other hand, presented attitudes characteristic of the "pseudo-independent status." They realized that people of color were treated differently than Whites; they were not "color- blind" and were genuinely concerned about the racial oppression that people of color experience in this country. But like the undergraduates, they had given little thought to their racial privilege or how their own complacency in regards to racism could reinforce and perpetuate racist policies and practices. In fact, both groups of participants seemed to have a limited awareness of the pervasiveness of cultural racism, the extent to which they were influenced by stereotypes, or the degree to which people of color were invisible in the school curriculum. For example, few had thought about the racial implications of tracking, the educational system's overreliance on standardized testing for placement decisions or the ways in which cultural stereotypes could influence teacher expectations." (p. 48)

Their findings are well aligned to those in this study. White participants experienced the highest levels of dissonance when learning about White culture and its

supremacy in educational curricula, pedagogy, policy, and practice. They struggled mightily with Spring's (2016) concept of "deculturalization" and how through the creation and enforcement of White supremacy and hegemony, the U.S. educational system has historically stripped their culture from students or color in order to push adherence instead to White norms. In order to transition from pseudo-independent status WRI and *immerse* oneself in the learning needed in order to *emerge* with a non-racist WRI, Whites must transition from a merely psychological understanding of race and racism to a sociological one. Understanding the historical origins of racial group membership and the stratification of these social-constructed groups in U.S. society (Andersen, 2003) allows educators to see how institutional and structural racism play out along these stratifications. Tackling institutional racism in education requires educators to move beyond psychologically grounded appeals for educators to analyze their individual implicit biases and develop their cultural competence (Gorski, 2014). These methods may have value for individuals in the contact or disintegration phases of WRI as their lack of interaction with people of color often lead to unacknowledged bias and prejudice (Helms, 1995). Progression into higher Phase II levels of WRI, though, demands that White educators acknowledge their racial group membership and how they are complicit in replicating its norms and mores in the classroom, schoolhouse, and beyond. They must acknowledge past attempts to help students or color conform to White dominant group standards and reject the notion that whiteness as standard, normal, or a goal to be achieved (Michael, 2015).

The process of accepting Whiteness and its sociological implications is fraught with dissonance. Holly's journals are replete with feelings of frustration, anger, and guilt. She explicitly documents emotions triggered by dissonance, their origin, and her on-

going annoyance at having to manage them despite feeling that she is making progress with her WRI. She intellectually grasps the need to experience course-related dissonance in order to develop her identity, but feels overwhelmed by the emotional load that navigation of this dissonance requires. Her reflections mirror comments often made by White participants in light of their struggle through the MTE coursework: that they "gave up" their nights/weekends to enroll in this program, as if their time commitment should trump any emotional strife they may experience wherein. Though she never explicitly asks for it, ("I think that being in this class should help me address these challenges") Holly appears to want instructors to help her manage her dissonance in order to help her avoid feeling complicit with a system of White supremacy. Holly has realized that just by being White, she is perpetuating a racist educational system that privileges her learning experience over others. Helms (1995) talks about the emotional pain of the disintegration phase which prompts the White individual to reintegrate into prior conceptions about White racial superiority. A White individual in the pseudo-independent phase of WRI, Holly also experiences pain, though it is prompted by course content rather than everyday experiences.

Michelle (pseudonym) progressed from Contact to Pseudo-Independence throughout the semester according to her pre-post WRIAS scores. Her journals, though, detail a progression into the beginning of autonomy, which calls into question the accuracy of her WRIAS results. Early in the course, she documented dissonance about the intersectional nature of racial and class privilege, the normalization of Whiteness, and the myth of meritocracy. "It's hard for me," she reflects "to recognize when it is not only my hard work but also my skin color that impacts my success." She admits that she "never realized that white people had to define their own racial identity" and to feeling

"white guilt when discussing race." Later in the course, she details the revelation that "'school culture' is white culture" and how educators "don't acknowledge that much of what we are expecting from our students, especially behaviorally, is because of the white culture that created the school system." She laments blindly teaching students to value hard work and competition, as these values "may conflict with their family's culture." Michelle's struggles with the "taken-for-granted" nature of White culture lead her to reject notions of meritocracy altogether: "It's a privilege to be able to believe in meritocracy because it allows those of us that start ahead to feel less guilt." Michelle even shows signs of burgeoning immersion-emersion WRI later in the course as she begins to consider how to change White institutions rather than people of color (Helms, 1995). She opines "It's hard for me, especially as a White person, to see how the school system could be changed to integrate these non-white characteristics…" but then commits to confronting her peers' colorblindness, deficit, and context-neutral (Milner, 2012) mindsets through reframing data chats, and refusing to ascribe students' lack of success to a lack of effort of the community in which they live. Michelle's later entries detail a kind of "soul searching" about an appropriate White response to racism that is indicative of an immersion-emersion WRI. Her commitment to taking action hints that she may soon be able to *emerge* out of this phase into an autonomous and anti-racist WRI. Her ability to manage wanting to "disconnect from those white people who voted for Trump" and being "non-defensive about feedback" given by people of Color will help to determine if she is able to attain and maintain an autonomous WRI (Helms, 1995).

Disorienting Dilemma IV: Interracial Dialogue

Holly's post-course WRIAS indicates that she has attained Immersion-Emersion WRI over the course of the semester. Her journals reflect this shift as well, as she

documents a changing relationship with her Latino in-laws. Holly's Columbian husband received special education services as a child, something that his parents outwardly attributed to his immigration status and accent. As a special educator herself, Holly recounts repeatedly questioning her in-laws about the contents of her husband's IEP including his disability code, services, and accommodations, and receiving no answers. Holly admits to discounting their opinions and feeling defensive in her belief that educators in the Carver district (which her husband attended) would never misdiagnose a disability or allow bias to cloud their judgment. "Hearing stores from the [in-class personal experience] panel, the documentary (*The Color of Fear*), and from the presentations (counterstories) makes me realize that there may in fact have been some truth to the point [my in-laws] are constantly trying to make." She acknowledges that her husband's educational experience "could have been different had he been white" and that her in-laws may have made the right decision by rejecting disability services in high school and insisting that their son be placed in honors classes. "This class," Holly writes," allowed me to think, for the first time in eight years, that perhaps his parents had a point." This admission, an "uncomfortable realization," illustrates Holly's new Immersion-Emersion status for processing racial information. Rather than trying to make her in-laws of color conform to her (White dominant) beliefs about special education, she predicts that she will be able to engage them in "a more understanding conversation" in the future. Holly's WRI development has shifted from trying to help her in-laws meet the White group standards (Pseudo-Independence) to beginning to consider changing her views and herself as a White person. She speculates that she will use her new racial understanding to reflect on "the role that I play in societal racism," a key commitment for Whites in the Immersion-Emersion phase.

Strategic Instruction and Interracial Dialogue Help Participants Navigate Dissonance

Learning about Dissonance Theory

Though they did not attribute feelings of safety and support to learning about and reflecting on cognitive dissonance, the theory seeped into participants' everyday vernacular. A White female elementary teacher posted to social media a picture of students working collaboratively to multiply decimals captioned "Cognitive dissonance going on here in math. But they aren't giving up. Perseverance!" A Black male participant emailed instructors a picture of his two young sons dressed up as "The Cat in the Hat" for their school's Read Across America Week and noted feelings of dissonance as he considered his new knowledge about Geisel's racist leanings. In her literature review about colorblindness, a White female student spoke of the dissonance that White teachers spark in students of color when they say they "don't see color" and inadvertently erase the student's identity and lived experience. "A teacher who preaches colorblindness refuses to acknowledge the part of a child that comprises a large piece of their identity," she states. "Avoiding race promotes the idea that a student's race does not matter or has little impact on their life." She then cites Gallagher (2003) in asserting that a "colorblind mentality is likely a way for whites to avoid cognitive dissonance by building a narrative that removes the importance of race".

Dissonance theory provided both White and participants of color alike the language to describe the cognitive conflicts that they face as educators with social justice leanings in a highly racialized society. People of color frequently experience dissonance due to a disconnection between their lived experiences and the norms of White dominant culture. In order for Whites to grow into a healthy non-racist or even anti-racist WRI,

they too must experience and give voice to dissonance. In the early stages of WRI, Whites must grapple with a socialization that demands they pretend race does not exist and does not matter, even in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Whether they acknowledge it or not, White have been socialized into this dissonance; instruction and reflection on cognitive dissonance theory provides White educators with an opportunity to unpack the origins and continued presence of dissonance in their WRID.

Interracial Dialogue and the Productive Zone of Dissonance

Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky's (2009) call for leaders to embrace and foster disequilibrium in order to spur organizational change provides a model for those who wish to promote educators' WRID. The authors suggest that asking tough questions, examining current organizational norms, and advocating for change produce both organizational and individual disequilibrium. They envision the organization's leader as having his hand on an invisible thermostat, fiddling with it to see "how much heat the system can tolerate" (p. 29). In order to manage the disequilibrium produced by disturbing the organization's systems, they advocate that the leader aim to keep the temperature in what they call the "productive zone of disequilibrium" (PZD): enough heat generated by your intervention to gain attention, engagement, and move forward, but not so much that the organization… explodes" (p. 29). When initially undergoing a change effort, they note, individual and collective disequilibrium is low, and individuals often acknowledge that there is a problem but do not feel compelled to address it. The leader must push the group into the PZD by raising the heat to "the point where the discomfort of not dealing with the problem is the same as or more than the discomfort that would come from any nasty consequences of not addressing the problem" (p. 31). As the leader pushes the group forward, the intensity of the disequilibrium rises and falls, a

trajectory they liken to path of a bumblebee. Knowing this trajectory, the leader must "anticipate and counteract tactics that people will use to lower the heat to more comfortable levels" (p. 31).

Singleton (2013) applies Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky's (2009) PZD model to the concept of leading for racial equity within an educational organization. He argues that school systems fail at achieving the goal of racial equity in student achievement "because they are either too complacent, and thus not learning and growing as they should, or they are too stressed to function in effective professional ways" (p. 173). He reminds leaders of the adage "no pain, no gain," and encourages them to embrace stress as a natural and necessary component of adaptive transformation. Those leading for racial equity must accept that a "system's educators must experience a level of sustained stress, or disequilibrium, over a protracted period of time" (p. 172). Their methods must involve "discomforting the comfortable and further stressing those who are already stressed" (p. 174). He offers his own *Courageous Conversations about Race* protocol, which includes agreements and conditions for productive racial conversation, as a means of engaging educators within the PZD.

Both Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky's (2009) PZD and Singleton's (2015) adaption of it provide models of how to engage White educators in developing their racial identities through the dissonance that such a process necessarily produces. Figure 5.4 incorporates the PZD model into Helms' (1990) linear stage-theory model of WRI.

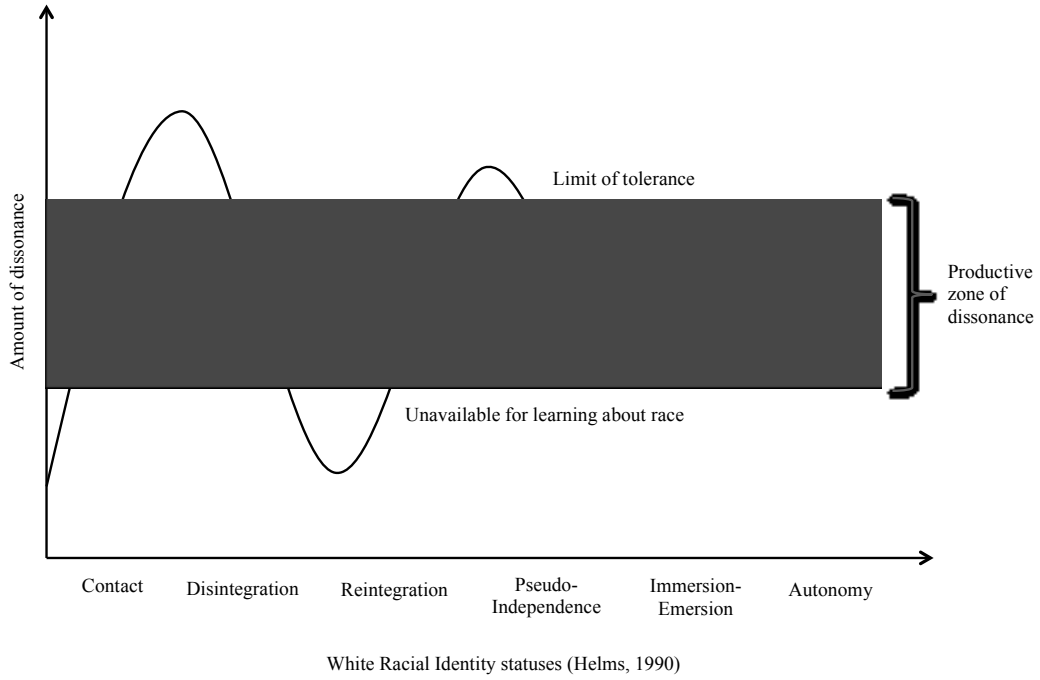

Figure 6 The Productive Zone of Dissonance

Adapted from "The Productive Zone of Disequilibrium" in *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World* by R. Heifetz, A. Grashow, and M. Linsky, 2009, p. 30; and "Adaptive Leadership: A Safe 'Holding Space' for Courageous Conversations" in *More Courageous Conversations about Race* by G. Singleton, 2013, p. 171.

This model posits that Whites' face *on-going* dissonance, or disequilibrium, as they engage Helms' (1990) statuses for responding to racial information (Helms' model only directly mentions the dissonance that occurs between the disintegration and reintegration statuses). Participants in this study documented on-going dissonance as they progressed through the semester, with many noting spikes in the pseudo-independent phase. Further analysis of these instances of dissonance indicate that certain course content not only sparked dissonance, but also may have prompted WRID between the pseudo-independent and immersion-emersion WRI statuses (Figure 5.5).

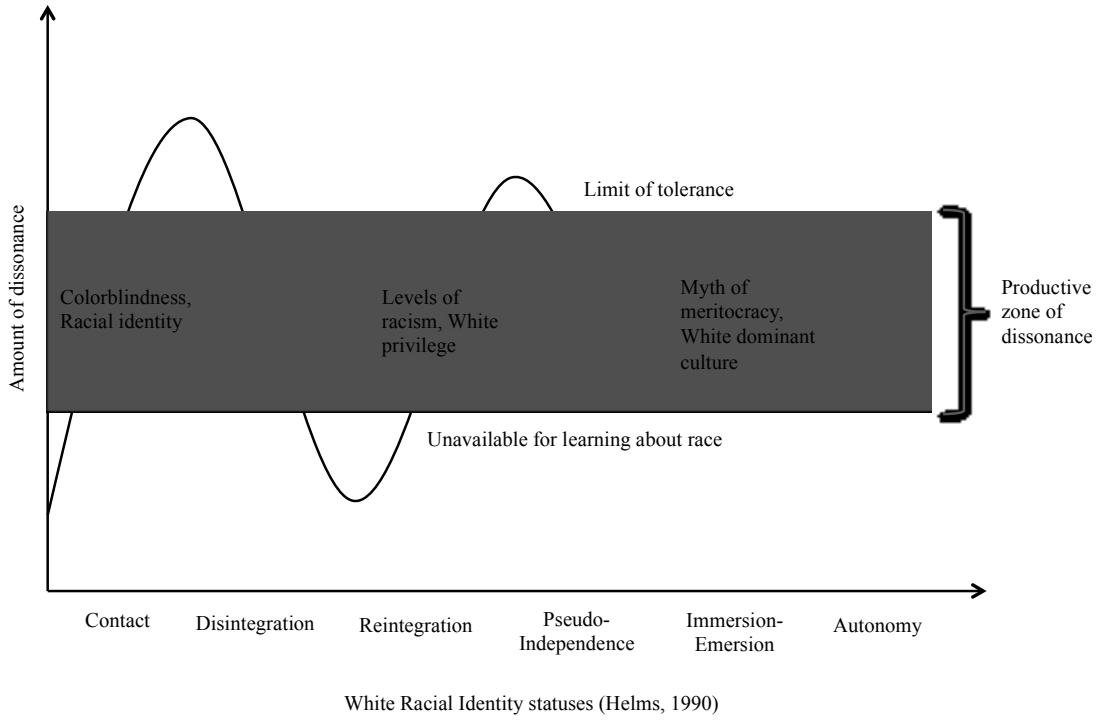

Figure 7 The Productive Zone of Dissonance, WRI, and the course content that prompts both

Findings suggest that designers of courses about race and its role in American education can sequence course content so that it aligns to the trajectory of White participants' WRI in order to prompt optimal growth. They can also leverage the concept of PZD in order to embed structures and processes (such as agreements for racial conversation, private individual reflection opportunities) in order to keep participants in a place where they are able to experience the dissonance that comes from learning about race without disengaging out of frustration or apathy.

Participants noted the inclusion of strategic paired, small group and whole class discussions as particularly important in navigating dissonance and also in WRI development. For Whites, interracial dialogue and friendships have the power to interrupt their construction of racial narratives and challenge the dominant opinions and understandings about race into which they have been socialized (Versalles, 2016).

Providing multiple and strategic opportunities for interracial dialogue is one way that instructors can create and maintain the PZD for White participants.

Conclusions

Race-related stress persists beyond the Disintegration phase of WRI development. White educators experience this discomfort acutely, especially as they transition from processing racial information using a pseudo-independent status to *immersing* themselves in learning about the lived experience of people of Color and *emerging* as a non- or even anti-racist White (Helms' fifth phase, Immersion-Emersion). In order to progress in their WRI development, White educators require careful attention to learning content as well as learning structures and processes which helped them to feel safe and/or supported in the face of on-going dissonance. Course content aligned to the phases of WRI supports participants' racial identity development; they learn about WRI in general, and then learn sequentially about colorblindness, White dominant culture, privilege, levels of racism, and anti-racism. Content focused on the sociological aspects of race (racial group membership, White dominance and privilege, the stratification of society along the intersecting lines of race and class) is more likely to promote WRI development beyond the initial three racist phases. In order to navigate the dissonance prompted by this racial content, White educators benefit from explicit instruction in not only racial identity theory, but cognitive dissonance theory as well. Helpful to White MTE participants is a combination of (a) interracial dialogue guided by established agreements and a common language, and (b) individual opportunities to reflect on the experience of content-related dissonance including how and why it manifests as well as how they choose to resolve it. MTE instructors need to turn up the proverbial *heat* for White participants in terms of

content, but also ensure that the dissonance it evokes falls within the productive zone (PZD) if they wish to promote WRI development.

Implications for Practice

The goals of MTE align well to Mezirow's (2000) goal for transformative adult learning: "to help adults realize their potential for becoming more liberated, socially responsible, and autonomous learners" (p. 30). MTE designers must realize that their curricular and pedagogical decisions are never neutral (Mezirow, 2000), and can be strategically leveraged to help create "cells of resistance to unexamined cultural norms in organizations, families, and political life… [to help participants to] become active agents of cultural change" (p. 30). Transformative learning for White educators in an MTE setting requires the use of disorienting dilemmas that help them call into question their previously-held beliefs about race and its impact on education. It requires the use of content that exposes the sociological aspects of Whiteness, including White dominance, as well as supportive psychological theory (WRI, dissonance) and process (interracial dialogue) that help White participants adopt new, more inclusive worldviews. Interracial dialogue can be carefully structured around agreements designed to promote a PZD for White participants, as doing so fosters a space for critical discourse (Mezirow, 2000) needed to help participants "critically reflect on, appropriately validate, and effectively act on their (and others') beliefs, interpretations, values, feelings, and ways of thinking" (p. 26).

Though this research was conducted in an MTE program into which participants self-select, its findings indicate that designers of MTE experiences can mechanize cognitive dissonance and disorienting dilemmas in any learning about race designed for White educators. Ultimately, despite their emotional reactions to course-prompted

dissonance, White educators have a duty to interrogate their Whiteness given the racial demographic divide between themselves and their students. They must liberate themselves from racist ways of interpreting the actions of students and their communities in order to make more informed and autonomous choices (Mezirow, 2000) when it comes to their educational policies and practices.

Implications for Future Research

Broadly, the dichotomous Black and White nature of many tools designed to assess racial identity development merit further study. Given the growing multiracial and Latino (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016) student populations, new theories and tools are needed to help all educators to assess not only their own racial identity development but that of students in these groups as well. In regards to the specific program under study in this investigation, evaluation of how the program promotes racial identity development in its participants deserves further investigation. Also, given that newer program cohorts are self-selecting into racial-alike groups (the weeknight cohort is mostly White and the weekend cohort mostly of Color), a future study could track the WRI development of Whites in both cohorts in order to ascertain the impact of interracial dialogue (or lack thereof) on WRI for White educators.

Limitations

There are several sample and design limitations within this study that restrict the researcher's ability to conclusively address the all of research questions guiding it. A major limitation is the relatively small sample sizes of both the treatment (n=13) and comparison groups (n=10). Both samples are also subject to selection bias, as they have opted into an MTE program in the context of a district that champions equity as one of its

core values. Participant responses to surveys that assess racial attitudes (WRIAS, select questions from the CoBRAS on the quantitative dissonance measure) may indicate social desirability; participants may have selected answers that appear most acceptable to the researcher/instructor or within the general context of the Carver School District, whether these represent their true racial attitudes or not. Agreement with items representing a Reintegration phase WRI was markedly lower than other WRI phases, which may be further indicative of the social desirability at play in participants' responses. A threat to internal validity includes the low levels of internal consistency within the WRIAS subscales. The Cronbach alphas for select pre-test WRIAS subscales (Contact α=.29, Pseudo-Independence α=.39, and Autonomy α=.33) as well as certain post-test WRIAS subscales (Pseudo-Independence α=.51, and Autonomy α=.-.09) indicate a lack of internal reliability within the subscales. The negative value for the post-test Autonomy subscale is due to a negative average covariance among the subscale items and violates reliability model assumptions. Use of coded qualitative journal data to also assess participants' WRI phases helps overcome some of the reliability and validity issues posed by use of quantitative WRIAS data.

Due to nature of the data collection timeline in this investigation, it was not possible to collect both pre- and post-*program* measures of WRI or dissonance. Future research could include collection of this data and allow for exploration of the impact that the MTE certificate program has on these variables.

Despite a preponderance of literature urging a focus on MTE for pre-service educators, the program under study in this investigation focuses on in-service educators. Its designers (of which the researcher is one) believe strongly in the need for a two-pronged approach to MTE: one for pre-service educators who have only just begun their

experiences in the field, and one for more-seasoned educators whose unexamined and potentially racist ideologies may have been reinforced by their experiences in the schoolhouse. The program's focus on these in-service educators who have opted into MTE coursework is deliberate; the program's theory is that change occurs best from the bottom-up. The Carver School District has recently mandated cultural proficiency training for all employees. The reception to these required trainings varied widely from enthusiastic embrace to complaints of "Why do I have to be here?" The designers of this equity certificate do not subscribe to the notion that racism can be mandated away. Instead, they chose to address the individuals working closest with today's diverse student body, in hopes that their transformation into more racially and culturally sensitive practitioners will inspire others to commence their own journeys.

Final Thoughts

Since the election of President Trump, the country has become increasingly polarized, not only politically, but racially as well (Pew Research Center, 2016). Overt racism, sexism, and anti-Semitism (Okeowo, 2016) are on the rise. Even Whites who denounce White *supremacists* admit to holding beliefs aligned to notions of White *supremacy* (University of Virginia Center for Politics, 2017). These political and racial divides play into what DiAngelo (2012) calls a false binary, or thinking that one set of beliefs is inherently "good," while the opposite is inherently "bad". Understanding the nature of WRI development and the cognitive dissonance it entails and engaging in productive interracial dialogue can help White Americans move beyond false binaries and become more open-minded, reflective, and productive members of a society struggling to retain its democratic identity.

In *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. DuBois (1903) introduces his own binary designed to explain the experience of African-Americans: dual-consciousness. In order to survive, DuBois argues, Blacks must operate successfully in both Americas, one White and one Black:

> this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness— an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (p. 2-3).

In order to actualize fully autonomous and anti-racist WRI, Whites too must embrace a type of dual-consciousness, one that allows them to reflect on their role in maintaining White supremacy while simultaneously embracing the interracial movement to destroy it.

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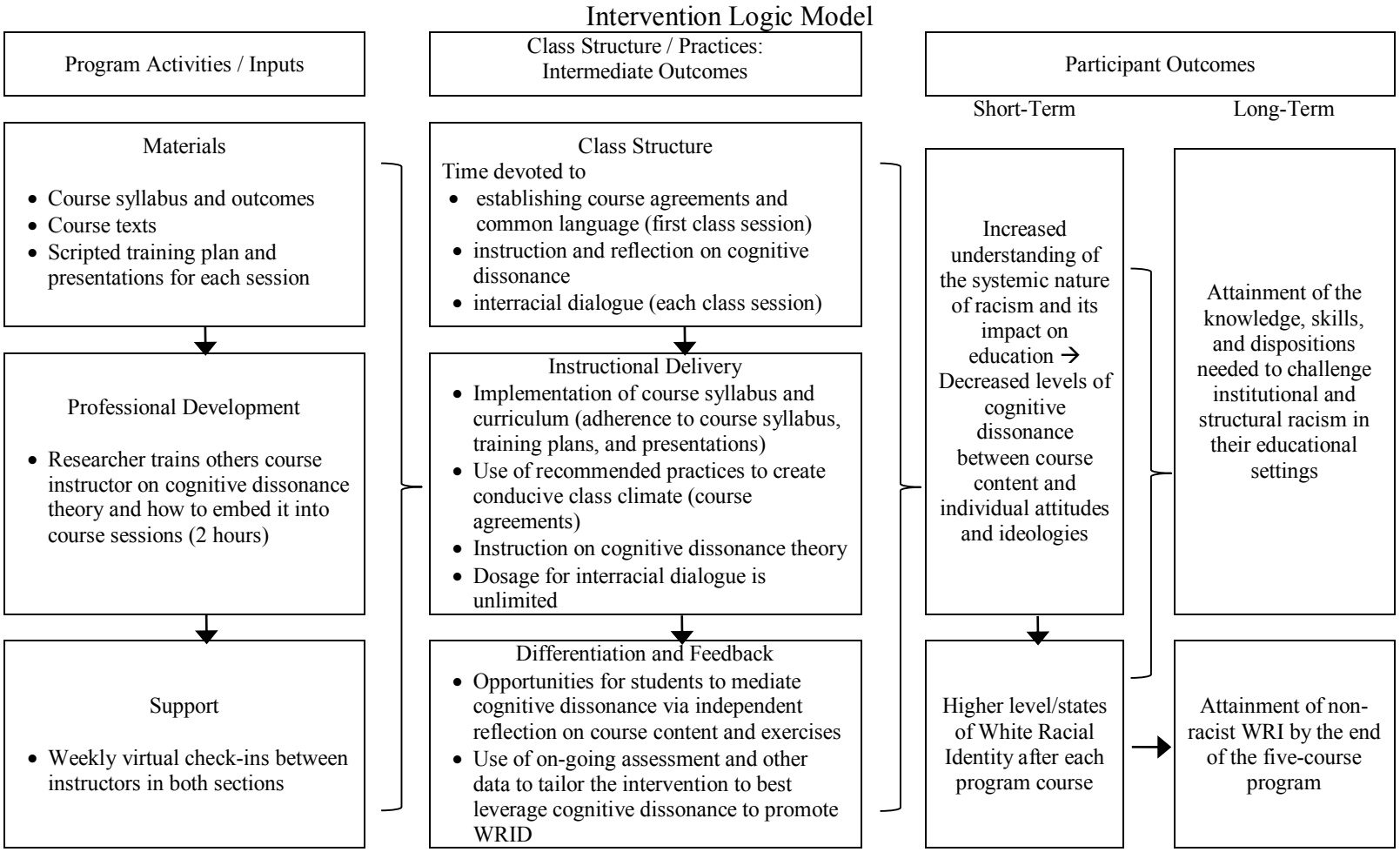
Appendix A


Intervention Logic Model
Program Activities / Inputs
Class Structure / Practices: Intermediate Outcomes
Participant Outcomes
Short-Term
Long-Term
Materials
Course syllabus and outcomes
Course texts
Scripted training plan and presentations for each session
Professional Development
Researcher trains others course instructor on cognitive dissonance theory and how to embed it into course sessions (2 hours)
Support
Weekly virtual check-ins between instructors in both sections
Class Structure
Time devoted to
establishing course agreements and common language (first class session)
instruction and reflection on cognitive dissonance
interracial dialogue (each class session)
Instructional Delivery
Implementation of course syllabus and curriculum (adherence to course syllabus, training plans, and presentations)
Use of recommended practices to create conducive class climate (course agreements)
Instruction on cognitive dissonance theory
Dosage for interracial dialogue is unlimited
Differentiation and Feedback
Opportunities for students to mediate cognitive dissonance via independent reflection on course content and exercises
Use of on-going assessment and other data to tailor the intervention to best leverage cognitive dissonance to promote WRID
Increased understanding of the systemic nature of racism and its impact on education → Decreased levels of cognitive dissonance between course content and individual attitudes and ideologies
Higher level/states of White Racial Identity after each program course
Attainment of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to challenge institutional and structural racism in their educational settings
Attainment of non-racist WRI by the end of the five-course program

Appendix B

Five-Course Sequence in Graduate MTE Program

Course 1: Introduction to social justice and education

Course 2: The impact of race and ethnicity on American education

Course 3: Culturally responsive teaching

Course 4: Action research for social justice

Course 5: Leadership for social justice

Appendix C

Sample Questions from Multiple Measure Cognitive Dissonance Assessment (pre- and post-course)

(Racial) Attitude Prompts (1- strongly agree to 5-strongly disagree)
Race is very important in determining who is successful and who is not.
Racial and ethnic minorities do not have the same opportunities as White people in the U.S.
White people in the U.S. are discriminated against because of the color of their skin.

Affect Prompts (1- does not apply at all to 5-applies very much)
Uncomfortable
Happy
Annoyed with myself

Biographical Sketch

Heather E. Yuhaniak obtained a double bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and Writing from Loyola College in Maryland in 2000. She earned a master's degree in Special Education (concentration: Inclusion) from Johns Hopkins University in 2005, as well as two graduate certificates, one in Literacy Coaching from the University of Maryland (2007) and one in Administration and Supervision from McDaniel College (2010). Yuhaniak completed her doctoral degree in Educational Leadership from Johns Hopkins University in 2017. She has been an educator for 18 years and currently serves as a district-level equity specialist in Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland.